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ABSTRACT

This document presents a guide to increasing self-esteem in individual students, in the classroom, and throughout the school environment of elementary and middle school students. The guide was created from a self-esteem model positing that strong self-esteem can be attained only when children experience positive feelings within four conditions of self-esteem: Connectiveness, Uniqueness, Power, and Models. The established model is expanded upon and background information and concrete suggestions for incorporating these conditions into existing elementary or middle school curricula are provided. The nine chapters of the book provide an in-depth explanation of each of the four conditions of self-esteem, suggest specific methods for observing and evaluating children's levels of these conditions, and present essential techniques for improving self-esteem in daily one-on-one and group interactions. Over 50 classroom activities that enhance and maintain student self-esteem within existing content areas are included, as are concrete guidelines for designing one's own activities based on solid self-esteem principles. The book also suggests ways to plan or revise discipline and classroom procedures to respond to self-esteem issues and ways to assess and enhance the self-esteem of teachers, staff, and administrators. (NB)

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Reynold Bean

The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem

SECOND EDITION

A New Approach for Elementary and Middle Schools

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About the Author

Reynold Bean, EdM, has been a teacher, school administrator, therapist, educational consultant and school board member and has managed counseling agencies and residential treatment facilities for at-risk teens. He has conducted workshops on self-esteem throughout the United States for many years. He has authored or co-authored eight other books having to do with children, self-esteem and education, including *Elementary Principal's Handbook: New Approaches to Administrative Action* (Parker Publishing); *Self-Esteem: The Key to Your Child's Well-Being* (G. P. Putnam); and *How to Be a Slightly Better Parent, How to Help Your Child Succeed in School, How to Raise Children's Self-Esteem, How to Raise Teenager's Self-Esteem, How to Teach Children Responsibility,* and *How to Discipline Children without Feeling Guilty* (Price, Stern, & Sloan).

The Four Conditions of *Self-Esteem*

SECOND EDITION

A New Approach for Elementary and Middle Schools

Reynold Bean, EdM

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Preface

This book is a revision of an earlier work co-authored with Dr. Harris Clemes. That book has long been out-of-print, but copies were passed from hand to hand of some devoted supporters. Their continuing interest in our work resulted in this revision.

Harris Clemes is a master of the art of psychotherapy and rightly devotes his time and attention to that calling. Only his clients and students of over thirty years know the profound contribution that he has quietly made to human welfare. He is my friend, mentor, intellectual partner, and most esteemed spiritual brother. His continuing support is a precious gift. His contribution to the birth of this theory of self-esteem is equal to mine. This version of our joint work was supported by him but I am responsible for its contents.

Hamilton Brannan, of the Merced County Office of Education, was closely involved with the birth of many of the ideas in this book. Nancy Abbey of ETR Associates kept the flame alive, until she captured my attention. I hope she likes the result. Liz Merriam of the Soquel Elementary School District in

Santa Cruz, California, gave, as always, informed advice. Kay Clark is the editor every writer hopes for—supportive, knowledgeable and enthusiastic from start to finish.

The many teachers and other professionals who attended workshops and lectures across the country for many years, and who responded to these ideas with affirming enthusiasm, showed me over and over again that we were on to something. Many of them wanted a book they could use as reference in their classrooms. Here it is.

Thanks to the following teachers from Soquel Union Elementary School District in Soquel, California, for their help with the activities in this book: Starr Saam, Jo Anna Race, Deborah Arredondo, Linda Pearson, Ingrid Lindsey, Stephanie Siddens, Theresa Coyle, Richard Sullivan, Pam Aguillar, Craig Broadhurst, Sheri Watson-Reilly.

Readers who like to know the intellectual roots of fresh ideas should devote attention, as I have, to the works of Erik Erikson, Alice Miller, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Jerome Bruner, Krishnamurti, John Dewey, Conrad Lorenz, A.S. Neill, and my first mentor, Arthur Morgan. That's my short list.

And to the memory of Bpk. M.S.S.

Introduction

Self-esteem is back. It's a topic that just won't go away. Committees, commissions, conferences and widespread media attention have brought it to the forefront of educational thinking again. It happens about every ten years as each new solution for the woes of education proves once more to have less than universal application. There's a good reason why self-esteem asserts itself from time to time.

Many people believe that the quality of education in the country could be raised significantly if only enough money were devoted to it. Others believe what's really needed are more teachers who are highly trained, intensely dedicated and capable of sustained attention to the emotional and intellectual needs of children. Still others believe education cannot become any better until private choices and public policy do something positive about family life, which of course includes solving the problems of poverty, racism, sexism and the host of social issues that undermine children's ability to learn.

There are professional educators who look for the Holy Curriculum Grail, for ideas and teaching practices guaranteeing that what we teach will get learned. Circling around these dominant themes are many others having to do with things like genetics, learning theories, nutrition, and the host of factors that influence the educational process. These are all good ideas but none seem to be the "answer." There never seems to be enough money, time or motivation to make significant progress in fulfilling the intention to create a knowledgeable and employable liberty-loving population.

Some children learn even while overcoming the constraints of poverty, racism, prejudice, and personal limitations. On the other hand, many children have all the right indices to be successful in school, but aren't. There seems to be a difference between children who are successful in school and those who aren't, but not all the differences can be attributed to intelligence or social indices.

There's something about attitude, motivation, optimism, confidence, persistence, responsibility ... something to do with the way children seem to *feel* about themselves and what they're doing that makes a difference in the way they handle school. It's vague, hard to specify, but it can be found in some poor children in inner city schools, and can be found lacking in some wealthy children going to school in privilege. Most teachers know intuitively what I'm talking about, even though it's hard to define.

We gave that feeling a name some time ago. We called it self-esteem and decided that even if we can't be absolutely sure what it is, it's apparent when it's present or absent. Because we haven't known exactly what it is, it's also unclear at times what we can do to increase it.

The concept of self-esteem reminds us of the old story about the blind men in India who, feeling different parts of the elephant, were sure that the part each was feeling described the elephant as a whole. Everyone who has some notion about self-esteem acts as if it's the whole answer. Then when a theory doesn't work for everyone, people are sorely disappointed and decide that the notion of self-esteem is too "soft headed" to be useful in the hard realities of schooling, and self-esteem is put on the shelf. Now that it's being taken off the shelf once again, controversy is emerging about it.

Some argue that we don't need to be concerned about self-esteem if we set higher standards, have higher expectations, take back control of the schools and introduce more discipline. What they overlook is that all those actions influence self-esteem depending on how they're done.

Some proponents of self-esteem suggest children need to feel better about themselves before they will be able to learn effectively, and propose many ways to get children to feel good. What they overlook is that one of the chief satisfactions influencing self-esteem is the experience of meeting high standards and overcoming obstacles through personal effort. It's a chicken and egg problem.

Most teachers I know don't take sides on this issue. They have an intuition that children who feel pretty good tend to learn better and faster and with more goodwill. So they do the best they can to help children feel good while they're trying to plug more educational stuff into their brains.

Many teachers are finding that more children are coming to school feeling bad about themselves and their lives. Our concern for self-esteem is well founded. Something is going on in our society making it very hard for children to feel good about themselves. This problem is bad enough, but at the same time, more intensive demands are being made about what children should be learning.

So the problem becomes compounded. Schools and teachers are required to put more and more demands on children who are less and less able to meet those demands. It's worse in some places than in others.

This book presents a way of looking at self-esteem that will help classroom teachers work on self-esteem issues at the same time they teach good solid content. It will show you how to help children experience more satisfaction in school while they are learning what you need to teach them.

Specifically, you will find that the book:

- Gives a structure for thinking about self-esteem that will help everyone mean the same thing when talking about it.
- Teaches how to assess the self-esteem of individual children in ways that prescribe what to do about it.
- Shows how to use discipline procedures that raise self-esteem while giving you more control of your classroom.
- Describes many practical methods for helping children raise their self-esteem that can be used moment-to-moment throughout the school day. In addition there are many special teacher-tested activities that can be used to raise self-esteem while teaching the basics.
- Helps you evaluate your own self-esteem and understand the influence it has on how you teach and with whom you're effective, and describes things you can do in your classroom to improve your comfort and satisfaction.
- Shows how working with individual children, your classroom and the school as a whole can create an overall climate for enhancing self-esteem in everyone in the school.

This book can be used by anyone who works with children in elementary or middle schools in regular classrooms or with special populations. It contains important material for supervisors and administrators who are responsible for monitoring the performance of people who work with children directly. It is especially useful when a team, group or school as a whole are using the materials to effect change in school climate. Most important, it helps a staff speak a common language that is practical, concrete and immediately useful in working with children, every day.

Self-esteem is not just about feeling "good," it's about feeling *satisfied*. It may seem to you that there is little or no distinction between the two, but there is a sense in which the difference is critical. We feel satisfied when something has happened that meets some internal standard we have had about the event.

Dictionary definitions indicate that satisfaction results from fulfilling a need or want. The Latin root of the word *satisfy* derives from root words meaning *to do enough*. We can feel *good* even if some biological condition is met over which we have no control. Resting after eating a large meal feels good because it allows the blood to move into the digestive organs without being needed for strenuous activity in other parts of the body. But we can't feel satisfied until we *do enough*. Preparing a fantastic meal that elicits effusive appreciation from one's family and friends has an impact on self-esteem.

The key to developing, maintaining and enhancing self-esteem in the classroom is to arrange things so children feel satisfied as a result of having done enough of the things that fulfill their needs and wants.

This book is about understanding the needs and wants of children and designing practical teaching strategies that meet them. Self-esteem increases when children can learn in ways that truly meet their needs.

Chapter

1

Understanding Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is about the way people *feel*. It is important to keep this in mind as you think about the children in your class, because the way to enhance self-esteem is to influence the way children feel. This is not done through controlling their behavior or by changing the way they think. Behavior and thinking are *reflections* of the way children feel, and are influenced by self-esteem. Self-esteem is the "driver."

We cannot "see" feelings directly, but we can observe the effects of feelings in how children act and what they say. Things children do or say are *not* self-esteem, but are expressions of it.

This is not to make a mystery of self-esteem, but to help you remember the goal of all self-esteem work: to produce learning situations in which children experience a high level of personal satisfaction at the same time as they are learning and retaining the material you're teaching them. To do this it is important to understand a few basic concepts about self-esteem. The first of these concepts is the difference between feeling *good* and feeling *satisfied* with respect to self-esteem.

Feeling Good vs. Feeling Satisfied

Teachers cannot long remain in classroom teaching unless they have many techniques for making kids feel good. Such things as smiling, touching, praising, gifting, supporting, playing, partying and feeding are some of the methods teachers use to make kids feel good. You do these things hundreds of times each day in order to maintain a positive climate in your classroom. You have to do them over and over again, in part because the effect on children's behavior is short-lived.

Smiling at Sarah, for example, can improve her whole demeanor, but her struggle with the next few math problems can bring her feelings down again. Praising Joey for reading well quickly can turn to despair when he stumbles over a sentence and feels he has disappointed you. Children's feelings are quite flexible and they flip back and forth, all day long, between feeling good and feeling bad.

Increasing self-esteem, though, is different from making a child feel good. Since the goal of self-esteem work is to help children feel satisfied, your efforts to do so will have a long-range effect. If children learn what gives them satisfaction and how they can produce that feeling in themselves, they can take control over their own inner state—and over how they feel. Increasing self-esteem is the process of helping children feel good because they feel satisfaction even when you're not doing anything to make them feel good.

How Behavior Reflects Self-Esteem

You have an important advantage in thinking about self-esteem if you are able to observe children and make discriminations among different types of behavior. Later in the book, we will discuss the importance of observing children and how to do it.

Here are some of the key behaviors that can tell you whether a child has high or low self-esteem.

Children with high self-esteem:

- Are proud of their accomplishments ("I really like this picture I painted.")
- Act independently ("I wrote this story about the dinosaurs all by myself.")
- Assume responsibility easily ("I'll water the plants for you.")
- Tolerate frustration ("This model is hard to put together, but I know I can do it.")
- Approach new challenges with enthusiasm ("We get to start learning long division today.")
- Feel capable of influencing others ("I think we should let Sara play too.")

Children with low self-esteem:

- Avoid situations that stimulate fear or anxiety ("I'm not going to school today, there's a hard test in math.")
- Demean their own talents ("Nothing I draw ever looks good.")
- Feel unliked and unwanted ("I'll never be picked for the team.")
- Blame others for their failures ("Mrs. Smith didn't give us enough time to study so I failed the test.")
- Are overly influenced by others ("Do you think I should wear my red sweater or green blouse? Should I have braids or a ponytail?")

- Become easily frustrated ("I can't make this kite fly; I'm just going to smash the stupid thing.")
- Feel powerless ("I can't find the tape. I don't have an atlas. I'll never finish this dumb project.")

You are probably thinking, "I know children who do all of these things sometimes. Do they have high or low self-esteem?" The important thing to remember at this point is that all children have swings in their level of self-esteem. Self-esteem can be and is constantly influenced by the events through which a child is passing. Their feelings (self-esteem) determine how they will react to different events.

Even children with generally high self-esteem will have doubt and anxiety when faced with new and challenging experiences. If their self-esteem is high enough, however, they will pass through the anxiety quickly and find a way to meet the challenge. Children with low self-esteem will try to avoid situations that produce anxiety even though there are some times when they feel confident enough to meet a new challenge.

Understanding self-esteem is based on being able to see the *patterns* in children's behavior. Patterns are sequences of behaviors which, taken as a whole, are unconsciously designed to produce a benefit for the child. This benefit is usually to feel good, or a least to feel less bad. Attributing meaning to a specific behavior without understanding the sequence or pattern within which it is embedded may result in dealing with it inappropriately.

Consider the following situation: You look up from your desk and see Robert staring out the window while completing a quiz the class is working on. Presuming Robert is not the class wizard in the subject, your first impulse may be to say something gently to get him back on task. Unless you had witnessed the pattern of behaviors that preceded his staring out the window you might not be able to tell whether Robert

- was being distracted by internal anxiety
- was reacting to another child's efforts to get his attention
- was seeking a calming visual background in order to think through the answer to a problem on the quiz
- was finished with the quiz
- was having trouble with the quiz and had stopped working on it out of frustration and anger

The same behavior may mean different things for different children, depending on their self-esteem. How you handle a situation always has implications for self-esteem.

As you read through the descriptions of high and low self-esteem in other parts of this book and watch children in your classroom, you will see that children with high self-esteem more often act in ways that are consistent with high self-esteem.

The Difference Between Self-Esteem and Self-Concept

To further understand what we mean by self-esteem it is important to explore the difference between self-esteem and self-concept. The two terms are often used synonymously, which confuses and obscures what self-esteem is really all about.

The simplest way to understand the difference is to remember that self-esteem has to do with *feeling* while self-concept has to do with *thinking*. Self-esteem is unconscious, expressive, and affects everything a person does, especially when action has some emotional content.

Self-concept, on the other hand, is a cognitive process—conscious beliefs about oneself—that are used to select behavior to fulfill an idea of what one should or shouldn't be doing. For example, an otherwise intelligent and competent person may believe he or she cannot balance a checkbook properly and therefore doesn't, even though the practice involves third grade math and only a modicum of personal responsibility.

Since self-concept can be reported verbally it is subject to all the distortions and alterations language permits. A person can use self-concept to create an effect on others, consciously eliciting praise, criticism, approval or compassion. Self-esteem, like an expression on one's face, is something that emanates from each person. It is apparent to anyone sensitive enough to see its expression, but being veiled from our own analytical processes, it cannot be used for effect.

Because self-concept is conscious, defined by beliefs about oneself, reportable and controllable, it has become the focus of didactic efforts to influence the way children feel about themselves. Many programs that propose to build self-esteem in children are actually designed to change self-concept, which is only one of the doors into children's self-esteem, and often a narrow door at that. Not all of the emotional needs of children can be satisfied by altering self-concept, as will be pointed out in succeeding chapters.

I wish to make clear that it is not irrelevant or inappropriate to work with self-concept. Self-concept is embedded in the broader and more pervasive processes of self-esteem. It is an important factor in understanding the Sense of Uniqueness and will be discussed later in greater detail. However, teachers should not have unrealistic expectations about the impact that self-concept work will have on children.

The distinction between self-esteem and self-concept results in a number of paradoxes that often show up when you try to "fix" self-esteem, but are actually working with the conscious processes of self-concept:

- Asking children how they feel about themselves produces confusing responses since wishes, hopes, fears and other distortions influence what children say. They will also be looking for the "right" answer—the one they think will please you.
- Reported changes in self-concept may not produce changes in observed behavior, since *feelings* influence behavior more than self-concepts or self-images. Trying to convince children that they can do something they believe they can't do can be fruitless. Heaping positive messages on a child can affect behavior in the short run but may not have lasting effect.
- One of the ways children with low self-esteem confirm negative reputations for themselves is to fulfill their teacher's best expectation for a brief period, only to slide back quickly into dysfunctional behavior. Children change their behavior in the short run to gain short-term benefits—pleasing their teacher is an example. Until self-esteem changes, though, they may not be able to maintain the motivation for very long.
- Introspective attention to one's own feelings and behavior, which is often the focus of "self-esteem" (actually self-concept) enhancement activities, is less likely to influence performance than is the satisfaction that comes from successes in children's everyday experience.

Furthermore, self-concept itself results in a set of dynamics that teachers need to pay attention to.

Children try to maintain a consistent self-concept. It is hard to change children's attitude that they cannot do math well, for example, when it has become embedded in their beliefs irrespective of what their actual performance has been.

Children want to have their self-concept confirmed by others. If they believe that they are good or bad at something, they try to get others to agree with the evaluation.

Children will try to meet the standards associated with their self-concept. Children who believe that they do something very well will work hard at that task; children who believe that they can't do something will find a way to fail at it, despite the efforts of teachers or parents.

One important difference between self-esteem and self-concept is this: *Changing self-esteem will always result in important changes to self-concept; changing self-concept may not result in any significant change to overall self-esteem.*

This last assertion is an important one with respect to the differences between self-esteem and self-concept, but, in truth, the evidence to support it comes more from clinical experience than from everyday observation in classrooms.

Many people, perhaps a majority of the American population, feel self-improvement can be achieved through personal efforts. The very large sales of "how-to" self-help books are witness to a peculiarly American belief in the individual's capability to improve very important aspects of personality or character through self-study and conscious intention. The continuing sales of this genre suggest that many people don't get the job done quickly or easily. Most of us find that we easily slip back into old patterns when conscious control of our belief systems, affirmations, or other self-concept devices slides back into complacency. When we forget about our new self-concept, we tend to go back to the old one if our deeper feelings have not been affected.

On the other hand, some people experience, for a variety of reasons, some deep and pervasive change in the way they feel about life itself. This may result from life threatening experiences, religious conversions or long-term therapeutic work. Clients often report that one result of such experiences is that they "automatically" begin to think differently about themselves (self-concept), and often don't return to the old ways.

These observations from clinical practice have application to self-esteem enhancement with children. Changing self-concept may have short-term observable effects, but generally will not last long. Raising children's self-esteem must involve a variety of appropriate experiences over time that change the way they feel. It's possible to do!

The table on page 16 shows a brief summary of the differences between self-concept and self-esteem.

How Self-Esteem Influences Behavior

There are different ways to describe basic human drives or motives. One basic motive seems quite simple, though, and that is that people do things to make themselves feel good when they have the chance to. This seems to be a fairly innocuous and obvious statement, but it has profound implications for influencing self-esteem.

Casual as well as clinical observation shows that healthy people don't do things that make them feel bad, unless they must do so in order to feel good. A simple example having to do with schooling is a case in point. Children who presume they are going to do well on an important test are more likely to take time from playing or watching T.V. (fun activities) to study (non-fun activity). They do so because they anticipate that by studying they will do well on the test, thus experiencing a high degree of satisfaction with themselves (a feel-good experience they can count on).

Two sets of factors limit one's ability to feel good. The first has to do with *internal* limitations. These might include lack of talent, competence, motivation or specific skills. The second set has to do with *external* limitations. These might include lack of resources and opportunities, or others taking control in a situation where one is capable of exercising influence, such as when parents or teachers don't permit children to do things they're competent to do.

Self-Esteem vs. Self-Concept

Self-Esteem	*Self-Concept*
A feeling; an inner state	An idea or mental image
Based on emotional processes	Based on cognitive processes
Not directly reportable	Can be reported, as on a self-concept survey
Always a true measure of how children feel	Can be distorted in reporting and can be lied about
Becomes unconsciously expressed in everything a person does	A person consciously seeks to align behavior with it
Can be inferred by observation	Can't be accurately inferred through observation
Produces a generalized response arising from a consistent set of feelings	Gives rise to a specific reaction to a specific set of circumstances that arises from how a person perceives those circumstances

Children with high self-esteem don't experience too many internal limitations although they may run into external ones. Children with low self-esteem have internal limitations that result in their perceiving external ones even when there are none, what we often call having "irrational fears."

When children can't find a way to feel good, they exercise a secondary motive: They will try to feel less bad. When this motive becomes manifested in behavior it usually results in failure for children or discomfort for those around the children, especially teachers and parents. For example, some children who feel they can't be successful at a learning task will begin to perform distracting behaviors to seek attention from others (including the teacher), which will make them feel less bad (less isolated, lonely and powerless). This behavior will elicit anger and sanctions of some sort from the people around them.

Children with high self-esteem, who don't have excessive internal limitations to feeling good, don't have to resort to this secondary motive. Children with low self-esteem resort to this motive, more often than not. That's why they become problems.

How Self-Esteem Influences Learning

If we take self-esteem seriously, we have to believe it has an important relationship to how well children learn. This is not always clear. We sometimes observe children with low self-esteem doing quite well in school while some children with high self-esteem aren't taking schooling very seriously. The simple evidence of our experience seems mixed.

The ideas in this book represent a point of view that can help to resolve this dilemma. The goal of working on self-esteem in the classroom is to enable children to experience a high level of satisfaction from learning activities. This means self-esteem enhancement must work along two paths at the same time.

Internal limitations to children being able to experience personal satisfaction from learning must be diminished. Such internal limitations might include fear of failure or success, lack of confidence, low skill levels, poor self-concept, confusion, social distractibility, mistrust—a whole raft of factors occurring inside children that may not arise from their school experience, but may reflect disabilities in their home or personal lives. Self-esteem work must address such issues in the classroom, since teachers need to be able to influence these factors in order to improve the learning climate. Most teachers know how a few poorly motivated children can undermine a good learning climate.

At the same time internal limitations are being dealt with, learning activities themselves must be structured in ways that enhance and maintain self-esteem, so that the external conditions, the teaching/learning process itself, supports self-esteem.

This dual approach to self-esteem work results in a situation in which low self-esteem children are bombarded with self-esteem enhancing experiences, while children with adequate self-esteem do not have their esteem undermined by a poor learning climate.

Casual observation in any classroom shows that children who generally feel good and find satisfaction in doing schoolwork are able to do well in school and maintain goodwill in the process. They do so by being willing to accept more personal responsibility for what they do in the classroom. Another goal of self-esteem work is to move children along the continuum of taking personal responsibility for their schooling so they receive optimal satisfaction from the learning experience.

Let's look at what this means. The chief factor influencing school success is children's ability to take personal responsibility for their learning. Success in school is determined by children being able to work at their highest learning potential, however we define it. High intelligence is nice, but have you ever had bright kids in your class who just weren't motivated to work? The sense of responsibility wins hands down, every time.

Most reasonable teachers do not use perfection as the standard for judging whether children are doing adequately in school. If they did, then anyone making less than straight A's would be a failure, and the children in special education or learning disabilities classes or who suffer from physical limitations of their learning capacities would not be considered worth the investment in time or resources. But this is not the case. Children are considered successful in school when they are taking significant responsibility for learning. They become stars in their teachers' eyes when they show they also experience satisfaction from what they are doing successfully.

Children with high self-esteem are able to take more responsibility more comfortably and experience more personal satisfaction from doing so. High self-esteem doesn't make kids smarter, it enables them to work harder.

Self-Esteem and Social Relations in the Classroom

Research on self-esteem shows children with high self-esteem have better interpersonal relationships and are more likely to be chosen for leadership roles in schools. Children who get along well with people have a powerful impact on the learning climate in the classroom.

How much of your day is spent sorting out interpersonal problems that children can't seem to handle themselves? Include in this figure the time spent with children who have problems with you, the teacher, as well as with other children. The time spent is considerable, unless you have devoted attention to teaching children about handling relationship matters. If you have, you are probably doing things that enhance self-esteem, which reduces the need for children to depend on others to make themselves feel good.

This is the key to the link between self-esteem and the quality of relationships in the classroom. Children with higher self-esteem do not repeatedly require others to make them feel good, so they have more time available for participating appropriately in learning activities. Many children with low self-esteem are persistently distracted by the need to elicit emotional support from others (including the teacher) in order to reduce anxiety, loneliness or alienation. The time spent doing this eats dramatically into learning activities.

Low self-esteem influences children's relationships, since their lack of confidence is pervasive throughout their lives. Children with high self-esteem tend to enjoy relationships because they feel confident and satisfied in handling them. When children feel confident about relating, they presume their friends will be there when they get back from whatever else they are doing—like attending to solitary work in the classroom.

Much schooling is lonely work, even if there are thirty other children in the classroom. Unless you spend time on cooperative learning activities, have a great tolerance for children talking while they're working, or don't mind if they help each other with answers, you're expecting children to do a lot of work on their own. That's lonely. It's more lonely for children with low self-esteem, and they will do almost anything to assuage that loneliness.

Self-Esteem and Creativity

Most children have a natural capacity for creativity that is associated with fantasy and imagination. Making use of creativity in the classroom requires children to express themselves in some medium. It also generally involves placing the creative product before others to appreciate or judge.

We generally have little idea that a child is creative until we see some evidence of it. Self-esteem affects the production of the evidence, not whether the child has enough imagination to be creative.

Children with high self-esteem usually have the confidence to demonstrate their creative inner processes and expect to be appreciated for what they've done. Children with low self-esteem keep their creativity to themselves. They expect to suffer from critical judgments about what they express.

Have you ever wondered what Nate is doing when he sits in class, eyes glazed over, in some dreamy reverie, staring at nothing, totally disconnected from the learning activity? Chances are he is imagining something that is more interesting or less anxiety provoking than what is going on in the classroom. If he happens to be a child who has low self-esteem and you ask him what he was thinking, he'll probably say, "Nuttin."

Children with high self-esteem play with organizing materials in unique ways more than children with low self-esteem can. They feel self-assured and competent more often, which places fewer limitations on their ability to express their inner feelings in a variety of ways. It has little to do with technique. Children with high self-esteem have received approval, both in the classroom and at home, for being who they are, which includes their unique expressions of self. Children with low self-esteem are more cautious about expressing themselves in ways that other people can judge, since they have been judged negatively too often.

It is not sufficient to give children the opportunity to be creative and expect that all will be. The ones with low self-esteem will hold back until they feel safe, and many will never feel safe enough, until something has raised their self-esteem. Perhaps you have witnessed a child "coming out"; one who previously held back the products of a fertile imagination but all of a sudden, one day, showed you and others what had been going on inside all along. It can be astonishing.

Self-Esteem Is Not a Unitary Phenomenon

One of the issues that makes self-esteem confusing is thinking of it as a *unitary phenomenon.* By this we mean that if self-esteem is a "something" that is complete unto itself, then it should be more or less the same "something" wherever it is found. This also implies that what we do to affect it in one place, should have the same effect when we apply the same technique in another place. In practical terms, it should mean that if a teacher does something that raises the self-esteem of one child, the same thing should work if applied to another child who has low self-esteem. It doesn't take very long to discover that this isn't the case.

This variation has made self-esteem suspect. If we can't depend on it to mean the same thing at every time and in every place, how can it be useful in planning classroom interventions? If children don't respond to something designed to raise their self-esteem, does it mean there is something wrong with the technique or with the children? We seem to believe that if children don't respond to things that are supposed to raise self-esteem, they may be more "damaged" than we thought. It's time to rid ourselves of that notion.

Self-esteem is *not* a unitary phenomenon. It is a state that results from four "conditions" being fulfilled, within the child and in the environment the child lives in. These conditions are somewhat independent of each other, children can have more or less of each one, as can the environment, and one child's self-esteem problem may not be another's. Therefore, what we do to raise the self-esteem of one child may not work for another. Much of the rest of this book will explain why. The next chapter will explain these four conditions and how they can be used in your classroom.

Review

Now that you have a basic understanding of some of the important aspects of self-esteem, and some of the ways self-esteem affects the children you teach, it is time to examine how you can put those ideas to work to improve the learning environment in your classroom. But first, let's review some basic self-esteem principles:

1. Self-esteem is about feelings. It is basically unconscious and not reportable.
2. Self-esteem is about feeling *satisfied.* When basic needs are fulfilled, one feels satisfied. Self-esteem work is about understanding basic emotional needs, how they are expressed in school and how teachers can meet them and insure children are learning what they're supposed to.
3. Self-esteem has an internal aspect, the set of feelings children have inside themselves influencing how they respond to their experiences, and an external aspect,

the factors in the environment that influence how children feel.

4. The transactions between what is going on inside children and what is happening in their environment will determine how each child acts. This creates tremendous variation in how different children respond to the same experience.
5. Children with high self-esteem respond differently to their environment (external factors) because their internal factors (their feelings) are different from those of children with low self-esteem.
6. Children's self-esteem varies during the day and over longer periods of time based on developmental issues as well as persistent influences of their environment. This means that children with high self-esteem can have it lowered (even permanently) if things persistently go badly in the environment. It also means you can raise children's self-esteem if the environment is arranged to have a consistent positive effect on children's feelings.
7. It is important to distinguish self-esteem from self-concept so teachers don't have unrealistic expectations of changing self-esteem through cognitive methods that may undermine rather than raise it.
8. Patterns of behavior are more important than specific behaviors in understanding children's self-esteem.
9. Self-esteem influences learning through the way in which children experience satisfaction from learning activities.
10. Self-esteem influences social relationships. Children with low self-esteem depend on others for emotional support more than children with high self-esteem.

11. Self-esteem influences creativity through the degree of comfort that children have in expressing their internal processes of imagination, fantasy and imagery.
12. And, finally, self-esteem is a complex phenomenon, composed of relatively independent sub-factors. Teachers need to understand why different interventions work for some children but not others.

Chapter

2 How to Think About Self-Esteem

In this chapter you will learn the basic structure of the model or theory of self-esteem that is used throughout this book. You will find there are four basic conditions or feelings children need to experience in order to have high self-esteem. You will also learn about the three arenas in which self-esteem is understood and influenced.

It will help you to understand this material if you can place yourself inside a child's consciousness. Try to imagine or empathize with the way children might experience the things discussed in this chapter. When it comes to raising self-esteem, it's always useful to see things from a child's viewpoint!

The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem

The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem is the name given to four feelings that everyone experiences. When people say they feel "great" or "good" or "satisfied," they are experiencing one of these four feelings. People with high self-esteem feel all of these feelings frequently, in many different circumstances and with a high degree of intensity. People with low self-esteem have difficulty feeling one or more of the four feelings—they don't feel it very often, when and where they feel it is quite limited, or they don't feel it very intensely. In a manner of speaking, feeling "bad" is the absence of a significant experience of one or more of these feelings. Persistently feeling bad is a sign of low self-esteem.

Raising self-esteem involves helping children feel these four feelings more often and more intensely, until they are able to feel them without our help.

While the four conditions are feelings children have (internal factors), external factors also influence those feelings. Everything that happens to us affects our feelings, to one degree or another, but sometimes we hardly even notice. Different things affect different feelings. You can design classroom experiences that elicit specific feelings in children, and thus control the emotional climate in your classroom more precisely.

The following four conditions make up children's self-esteem:

- The Sense of Connectiveness
- The Sense of Uniqueness
- The Sense of Power
- The Sense of Models

The term *Sense of* is used in order to acknowledge that these feelings are often generalized, pervasive, subtle and even unconscious. Our feelings don't quite fit into the lexicon of emotions our language provides. Our feelings are usually rich, complex and hard to label. Each of the four conditions is composed of many issues.

This book explores the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem from many different perspectives. You will learn how to tell the amount of each condition that children have, how to build each condition in one-to-one relationships and classroom activities, how to use the conditions in discipline procedures, and how to plan your program to consistently enhance self-esteem in your classroom and school.

The following material will serve as a brief introduction to the four conditions. Later, each condition will be discussed in more detail in individual chapters.

The Sense of Connectiveness

In order to have high self-esteem, children must be able to gain satisfaction from the people, places or things that they feel connected to. These might be people who are important and influential in children's lives; groups who represent important values, such as people of the same ethnic group, class, team or sex; or institutions, objects, places or activities children feel are important. The value of these connections must be acknowledged by the people who are important to the children. These are the basic requirements for having this condition of self-esteem fulfilled.

Children with a high Sense of Connectiveness:

- Feel they are a part of something.
- Feel related in important ways to specific people, places or things.
- Identify with a group of people.
- Feel connected to a past or heritage.
- Feel something important belongs to them (feel a sense of ownership).
- Feel they belong to something or someone.

- Feel good about the things they feel part of (feel satisfied).
- Know the people or things they feel connected to are thought well of by others.
- Feel they are important to others.
- Feel comfortable with their bodies and trust them to work well (feel connected to themselves).

Children's overall self-esteem is enhanced when their Sense of Connectiveness is enhanced. This happens when the following conditions are met in the children's environment:

- They have a large number of important connections with people, places and things they value (e.g., friends, family, toys and books, "special" places around the home or neighborhood).
- They experience a significant degree of satisfaction from their connections (i.e., they experience positive feelings, such as love, goodwill, fun, joy, safety or excitement, from their connections more often than negative feelings).
- The people and things children feel connected to are acknowledged as valuable by other people.

The Sense of Uniqueness

In order to have high self-esteem, children must acknowledge and respect the qualities and characteristics about themselves that are special and different, and they must receive confirmation from other people that those qualities and characteristics are important and good.

Children with a high Sense of Uniqueness:

- Feel there is something special about themselves.

- Feel they know things or can do things that no one else knows or can do.
- Know that other people think they are special.
- Are able to express themselves in their own unique way.
- Feel creative and imaginative and have opportunities to safely express their creativity.
- Feel respect for themselves.
- Are able to enjoy feeling different or unusual.
- Feel they are being affirmed for what they *are* rather than being judged for what they are not.

Children's overall self-esteem is enhanced when their Sense of Uniqueness is enhanced. This happens when one or more of the following things occur:

- They are helped to understand what makes them special (e.g., personal characteristics, skills, affiliations, achievements).
- They are given a wide variety of opportunities to express themselves through a variety of methods (e.g., writing, speaking, drawing, dancing). The greater the variety, the more likely children will find a satisfying avenue for self-expression.
- They are praised for the things they value about themselves, not only the things adults value about them (e.g., a child may feel that athleticism is more important than intellect, even if the child is at the top of the class academically).
- They are not shamed for characteristics over which they have little or no control (e.g., size, looks, ethnicity, sex, their family's lack of affluence).

- They are helped to see that a combination of characteristics makes them special and different (e.g., just being a girl isn't special, just being big isn't special, and being a catcher is only a little special—but being a girl catcher on a little league team, big enough to stop runners is *really* special).
- The environment provides positive recognition for a broad array of personal attributes, not simply a narrow range of accomplishments (e.g., children are affirmed not only for high grades, athletic prowess, or money earned but for being honest, forthright or persistent).

The Sense of Power

In order to have high self-esteem, children need to have the competence to do what they must, the resources required to effectively express their competence, and the opportunity to use their competence to influence important circumstances of their lives. This is the basic requirement for having this condition of self-esteem fulfilled.

Children with a high Sense of Power:

- Believe they can do what they set out to do.
- Feel confident they can handle, one way or another, what is put before them to do, including things that might be risky or challenging.
- Know they can get what they need to do what they have to do.
- Feel they are in charge of their own lives, overall, despite having to depend on others some of the time.
- Feel comfortable when they have a responsibility to fulfill.

- Feel others can't make them do things they really don't want to do.
- Feel confident they can make the decisions they need to in order to solve the problems they're faced with.
- Know they're not going to lose control of themselves, despite pressures they may experience.
- Are able to use the skills they have in situations calling for them, and are comfortable about acquiring new skills.

Children's overall self-esteem is enhanced when their Sense of Power is enhanced. This happens under the following conditions:

- They are given the resources needed to meet important objectives in their lives (e.g., having even a small allowance allows children to make some important decisions).
- They are given many ways to exercise a Sense of Power, from being able to manipulate tools and other material resources (external factors) to controlling their emotions and solving problems (internal factors). The more ways children have to exercise their Sense of Power, the greater their feeling of control.
- They have the opportunity to use what they know and do well. This is the main strategy used to *maintain* the Sense of Power.
- They are allowed to make all the decisions they are capable of making successfully, even if they resist doing so. This is the main strategy used to *build* the Sense of Power.
- They have a sense of physical and emotional safety.

The more competences that children have and the more skillful they are at using them, the more confident they can be in meeting new circumstances (e.g., children who know how to ride the bus and deal with strangers can profit from greater mobility). Children who have an adequate Sense of Power have less need to control or manipulate others. Bullying, manipulativeness, avoidance of challenge, irresponsibility, and disabling fears are all signs of a diminished Sense of Power.

The Sense of Models

In order to have high self-esteem, children must be able to refer to human, philosophical and operational models to help them make sense of the world. They use these reference points to help them set their own goals, values, personal standards and ideals.

Children with a high Sense of Models:

- Know people they feel are worthy of being emulated.
- Feel confident they can tell right from wrong and good from bad.
- Have consistent values and beliefs guiding and directing their actions in different situations.
- Can depend on prior experiences to help them avoid being intimidated by new ones.
- Feel a sense of purpose and know, more or less, where they're headed.
- Are able to make sense of what's going on in their lives and of the circumstances in which they find themselves.
- Know the standards being used to judge them, and have a sense of their own standards.
- Know how to go about learning what they need to know.

- Have a sense of order enabling them to organize their environment in order to accomplish their tasks.
- Experience satisfaction from intellectual activity itself, regardless of content.

Children's overall self-esteem is enhanced when their Sense of Models is enhanced. This happens when the following conditions are met:

- Children have adequate *human models* in their lives. Human models are people who children elect to emulate. If, by mimicking or emulating these models, children are successful in the things they must do, then the models are adequate models. These human models may be literary, mythic or historical figures, as well as real people in children's experience.
- Children have adequate *philosophical models* in their lives. Philosophical models are the sets of ideas and beliefs that guide and influence children's behavior. To the extent that these models help children be successful in what they must do, they are adequate models. Ethical and moral principles that children hear being espoused and see being practiced influence the way they make choices and decisions about ethical matters.
- Children have adequate *operational models* in their lives. Operational models are the array of mental constructs that consciously and unconsciously influence children's actions and performance. These models are learned and reinforced through children's experiences; they are learned through repetitive behavior. When children have a broad array of such models they are helped to think clearly, act purposefully and be successful in what they have to do. Good manners, social skills, and the whole array of normative, age-appropriate skills

from tying shoes to flushing toilets—things we learn to do without thinking about them—fall into the category of operational models.

The Two Aspects of Self-Esteem: Internal and External

You will recall that the last chapter made clear that self-esteem has both *internal* and *external* aspects.

The internal aspect has to do with the feelings of satisfaction children are able to experience from the things that they do. This, in a general way, is what we have traditionally called self-esteem, because we have looked at self-esteem as something children carry around inside themselves.

The external aspects are events that happen to children. It is important to understand these things in two ways. One is how events influence and change the way children feel. This seems simple enough; we have all noticed how the things that happen to us affect the way we feel.

But there is a second and perhaps even more important way to look at these events. The meaning, importance and impact of external events are affected by children's level of self-esteem—the internal state. This means that any event will affect different children in different ways. Let's think about a small, but significant example.

Children react differently to being touched, as you know if you use this powerful tactic for affecting children's feelings. Lay your hand on different children's shoulders as they are sitting at their desks working. Some will turn and smile at you, others will scowl and give a quizzical look. Some will lean into your hand; you can feel the pressure. Some children will subtly pull away; you can feel them moving from under your hand as you leave it on their shoulders. It's clear that some children like you to touch them more than others. They feel differently about the *meaning* they ascribe to your touch.

Some may presume, unconsciously, the touch is a sign of your affection for them. They smile and return, in some manner, the good feeling they presume motivated you to touch them in the first place. Others presume your touch is an effort to get them to change something they're doing, a means of control. They will become confused or resistant, depending on how mistrustful they are and how they came to be that way. In all cases, children will react to your touch quickly and unconsciously in accordance with the meaning they judged your touch to have.

Children's internal states affect the way they react to everything. This is why even your best lesson plans and strategies that work for most of the children in your class may not work for all of them.

When you do something to raise children's self-esteem, such as praising them for jobs well done, it will affect them differently, based on the strength of each of the four conditions in each child. Each child has an internal "profile," so to speak, that determines his or her unique set of responses to external events. This profile is what we call, in a rough and ready way, the child's personality.

The Three Arenas of Self-Esteem

There is another piece of the self-esteem puzzle you need to have before you begin your self-esteem work. Children experience self-esteem in three areas: the Personal Arena, the Interpersonal Arena and the Group Arena.

Children experience their internal states—their feelings—in the Personal Arena. These internal feelings are unique combinations of the four conditions of Self-Esteem—Connectiveness, Uniqueness, Power and Models.

Children experience two kinds of external events that influence the way they feel. One kind of external event—direct one-to-one interaction—is called the Interpersonal Arena. There is another person at the other end of children's one-to-one relationships. In your classroom, the most important person is you.

The other external event is more general—experiences of group interaction that occur in classrooms, families, schools and other group and institutional settings. This is called the Group Arena. Group interactions are more than a collection of one-to-one relationships. In classrooms, group interactions include factors such as classroom climate, lessons and the variety of structured group activities that occur, as well as informal play, instruction and social groups.

Understanding self-esteem in terms of these three arenas is key to effectively increasing self-esteem in the classroom

The Personal Arena

We infer children's feelings from their behavior. Thus, in the Personal Arena, we focus on observing children an[illegible] analyzing, from their behavior, what their particular self-esteem strengths and weaknesses are. This is important to do in order to select self-esteem building activities that will make a difference to an individual child or group of children. (The Personal Arena is basically concerned with the behavior of individual children, although we also make judgments about a group's needs based on the incidence of different behaviors.)

Children who have low self-esteem behave differently from children who have high self-esteem. Some of the behavior is clear and obvious; some is subtle and requires persistent observation to see.

The behavior expressing children's self-esteem is *patterned behavior.* There are characteristic patterned behaviors that represent highs and lows in each of the four conditions. These are discussed in Chapter 3.

When children have low self-esteem, one of the four conditions is the *critical condition.* This condition must be handled in precise ways in order to achieve significant and persistent behavioral changes in the direction of higher self-esteem. These ways are discussed in the individual chapters devoted to each condition.

Once you have observed children and determined which of the four conditions is the critical condition, you can intervene to raise their self-esteem in the Interpersonal Arena.

The Interpersonal Arena

This is the arena where you communicate with a child one-to-one, using the approaches that work best with children who have weaknesses in each of the four conditions.

What you say, how you say it, and when you say it has a powerful effect on children's self-esteem. Children with low self-esteem react differently to their environment than children with higher self-esteem; they make different presumptions about the meaning of what you are doing or saying to them.

Each of the four conditions represents a different set of feelings. Children with a strong Sense of Connectiveness, for example, respond to people quite differently than do children with a poor Sense of Connectiveness. They generally are more open, friendly, warm, trusting and convivial. Children with a poor Sense of Connectiveness will be shy, overly aggressive, poor communicators, distant and reluctant to respond fully to others. Clearly, if you are trying to "connect" with these children, you will have to employ different tactics.

The key to making self-esteem interventions work with individual children is this: Strategies enhancing one condition do not necessarily work to enhance the others. You treat a child with a low Sense of Connectiveness differently than you do one who has a low Sense of Power, if you wish to make a difference in how the child feels.

Just as the behavior that represents a weakness in each condition of self-esteem is patterned, there are special patterns of interaction that have different effects on children. The Interpersonal Arena offers a wide variety of things you can do to affect each condition. This is where you have the most power to influence the self-esteem of individual children.

Teachers who are skillful at enhancing self-esteem in children are highly flexible in selecting ways to act with different children, depending on an individual child's special emotional needs. The four conditions model for self-esteem will show you how to judge what a child needs (Personal Arena) and how to select techniques that will have a powerful influence on children's feelings (Interpersonal Arena).

The Group Arena

Most of children's school experience occurs in group situations. By group situation, we mean any time two or more individuals are engaged in an activity having a common objective for all of them. The Group Arena can be a small reading group of three or four children, a classroom or an entire school.

The term *Group Arena* is used to mean anything influencing self-esteem that results from children's experience in any social system in which they participate. School experience is composed of many social systems through which every child must pass. Some pass through them comfortably, others with little or no satisfaction.

The Group Arena is where rules, procedures, norms, policies and other activities occurring in groups influence children's self-esteem. The activities that take place in your classroom influence the self-esteem of everyone in it, including yourself.

Certain things that go on in groups characteristically undermine or enhance the self-esteem of their members. You can learn how to understand the specific effect different group activities have on self-esteem, so that you can design activities to enhance self-esteem for all children in your class.

Classroom activities have a different effect on each of the four conditions, and different children have different self-esteem needs. An activity designed to raise children's Sense of Power may not have a significant effect on the Sense of Uniqueness. So a child with a poor Sense of Uniqueness may not benefit significantly from that activity. In later chapters you will find many activities designed to affect specific conditions.

Every teacher tends to emphasize some conditions of self-esteem more than others. Which ones are emphasized reflect the teacher's self-esteem as well as important norms or values in the school.

For example, if you are a teacher with a high Sense of Connectiveness (many teachers have high Connectiveness), you gain a good deal of satisfaction from interacting with others. You like to interact both frequently and intensively with children in your classroom because of this. As a result, you use classroom activities to increase the frequency and intensity with which children interact, because it gives you satisfaction to do so.

If you also have a low Sense of Power, you will tend to do fewer things that increase children's Sense of Power, and you will find some children who are immune to your warm, loving nature.

When children have problems with one or more of the conditions, they respond favorably to activities that raise those conditions. If you design activities so that all aspects of self-esteem are attended to, all children will find opportunities in your classroom to experience a high level of satisfaction and their self-esteem will improve if it needs to.

The same principles applying to the Group Arena in the classroom apply to the school as a whole. Chapter 9 provides material on how to affect self-esteem throughout the school.

Review

Here are the essential issues you need to keep in mind as you work your way through the rest of this book.

There are four conditions of self-esteem:

- The Sense of Connectiveness
- The Sense of Uniqueness
- The Sense of Power
- The Sense of Models

There are three arenas in which we work with self-esteem issues:

- The Personal Arena
- The Interpersonal Arena
- The Group Arena

Combining the conditions and the arenas will help us answer the following questions:

Conditions and Arenas

Condition	***Personal Arena***	***Interpersonal Arena***	***Group Arena***
Connectiveness	What does the child do that shows an ability to relate to people, places and things?	What can I do to improve the child's ability to relate more effectively and comfortably?	What can be done to improve the group's ability to have good relations?
Uniqueness	How does the child show respect for his or her special characteristics?	What can I do to improve the child's self-image and self-respect?	What can be done to increase the group's ability for creative self-expression?
Power	How does the child show control over his or her life and work?	What can I do to improve the child's skill, sense of responsibility and confidence?	What can be done to improve the group's ability to self-monitor and make good decisions?
Models	How does the child show the sense of order and purpose he or she feels in life?	What can I do to improve the child's understanding and ability to learn?	What can be done to set standards and expectations for the group to achieve?

Chapter 3

Observing Children and Assessing Self-Esteem

The only way to make accurate judgments about children's self-esteem is to observe their behavior and look for the signs letting you know their levels of each of the four conditions. This chapter will describe methods for doing classroom observations that can become part of your ordinary management practices. First, though, we need to review the reasons why accurate observations are important.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the difference between self-esteem and self-concept makes it important to observe children rather than ask them about their self-esteem feelings. The information you get through surveys or asking children how they feel is frequently distorted.

But the most important reason for doing observations is to overcome your own presuppositions about children and to see behavior that is usually hidden from you. This is a bold statement, requiring us to make our case.

Life in the Classroom

When the public complains teachers may be paid too much for the short days and short years they work, we counter by talking about "hazard pay"! Being in a room for hours and days with twenty to thirty active youngsters is difficult enough, but when you add to that experience the need to manage their behavior and teach them, all simultaneously, then the stresses of teaching become apparent.

Being aware of what is going on with all the children in your classroom is a daunting function of the teaching role. There are an incredible number of things going on at the same time, and many of them are important with respect to children's self-esteem.

As you are attending to a small reading group, a loud noise at the other end of the room tells you Joey may be at it again. You are standing before the class telling them about the Pilgrims, but are mainly conscious that Sarah has her head turned and is talking in whispers to Jennifer behind her. You are passionately describing how to solve a problem in math the entire class missed, but a movement off to the left warns you Mike may be hitting someone.

Your exhaustion at the end of the day is a result of trying to be a radar installation that can see around corners and tell the slightest variation in the normal functioning of the class. This continuing attention to the most subtle nuances of behavior is required in order to maintain a safe and orderly learning environment.

But your ability to keep tabs on the mood and activity of the children in your class has a downside that affects your ability to make accurate assessments of children's self-esteem needs. It's difficult to give your undivided attention to anything in the class for a substantial amount of time. You are in a state of continual distraction, trying to do each thing when you are being bombarded with sensory stimulation about everything else, including individual children's moods and attitudes.

Several key issues affect what you see and when you see it:

Signal Children. There are certain children in the class who are the first ones you turn to when something is going on because you presume they will be involved in it. These children "signal" something is amiss even if they didn't start it. Most teachers tend to overlook the behavior of signal children when they are not acting out. Much of their functional, adaptive and cooperative behavior is not observed.

The Rule of Second. The child who reacts is more likely to be noticed than the child who initiates. This is the basis of the ancient chant, "But he started it"! The child who "starts" something usually draws your attention away from something else you're doing (i.e., causes the distraction), but by the time you focus on what is going on, you see the "done to" child react. This is the behavior that registers. It's one of the factors that maintains victims in the classroom.

Reputation Is Everything. It's hard to live down a reputation, even when it's a good one. Children get labeled. When we label a child (even with positive labels, such as smart, hard-worker, creative) we tend to notice behavior that confirms the label and overlook behavior that doesn't. Kids who carry negative labels suffer from the general supposition that they did whatever it was they usually do.

What gets lost here is the evidence that kids who suffer from negative reputations work very hard to overcome them. Many of the efforts fail, but they are rarely acknowledged to have tried in the first place, since no one noticed. It's also the reason the emotional stresses of children who have "good" reputations often go unnoticed, until they act out their distress.

Background Noise. Expectations control what we notice in any situation. You tolerate incredible noise and confusion in a shopping mall on a sale day, while someone with a persistent cough can drive you bananas at the library. Your expectations about what should be happening in your class affect what you see. You notice children who stand out because they are doing something different from your expectations or the norms you are looking for. You tend to not pay attention to "background" noise you believe is OK. This means a number of things go on in your classroom that you never see happening because you don't pay attention to them. Some of these things are critical to understanding the behavior of individual children, because the behavior you're not seeing is part of an important pattern that can tell you something about what's going on inside a child.

Anatomy of a Behavior Problem

The "problem children" in your class are given this label because they repeat certain types of behavior despite your efforts to stop it. One reason this occurs is because the problem behavior is part of a sequence or pattern having a life of its own. Once started it normally proceeds to its usual conclusion. The child is not aware of the sequence. You will remain unaware of it unless you have been able to observe and understand the entire sequence. The following example illustrates a classic sequence in the life of a child who is easily distracted:

1. Yolanda begins a new activity, which can be anything—silent reading, a math lesson, reading group, a ball game—but it is something that she will have to devote time and attention to by herself, to some degree.

2. Yolanda makes an effort to attend to the activity. This effort can be seen in her paying attention, listening to instruction, facing in the proper direction, not engaging in alternative or distracting behaviors, and focusing on the materials or events that are necessary to successfully complete the activity.
3. Sometime during the course of the activity, something happens. This can be an internal feeling or external event that alters Yolanda's conscious attention to the activity. It can be a noise, something another child is doing, a memory that promotes anxiety, a daydream, an angry comment by the teacher toward another child, an airplane overhead, or anything the world might serve up at the time. Immediately Yolanda's attention to the initial activity stops and she begins paying attention to the distracting circumstance, internal or external. But Yolanda still appears to be involved with the activity to the casual observer.
4. At this point, Yolanda may be able to fend off the effect of the distraction and get back on task. Yet even if she does, she may still have missed some piece of information that will help her be successful. She is slightly out of phase with the activity, slightly out of touch with what's going on. Or the distraction may be substantive enough to fully engage her conscious attention, pulling her completely away from the task.
5. Even if Yolanda was able to get back on task, another distracting event occurs soon, perhaps of the same sort as the first, perhaps different. The same thing happens again. Yolanda's attention is pulled away from the task to the distraction. If she attempts to get back on task, she is somewhat further out of phase, having missed additional information or directives.

6. This flip-flop between attention to the task and attention to the distracting event continues until Yolanda is completely out of touch with what's going on in the activity, because she has missed out on too much information or direction. She now begins to behave in ways that show she is no longer attending to the task. She may stare blankly in the wrong direction, yawn, pull at her clothing or skin, get up, poke another child, turn to look at others, rifle through her desk, or any of a multitude of behaviors showing she is no longer in touch with what everyone else is doing.
7. This, characteristically, is when you notice that Yolanda is not attending to the task. You have not noticed the previous instances of distraction and return, since they were quick and subtle. You don't know what distracted Yolanda. You observe the end of a process that started several minutes ago. If you do not intervene in an appropriate way at this point, Yolanda's behavior will become increasingly inappropriate to the point where some sanction will be imposed, which may only be a verbal reprimand. Whatever it is, though, it will remind everyone that Yolanda has blown it again. Self-esteem is being affected in a negative way.

You could have stopped the above sequence if you had been aware of Yolanda's pattern and what the nature of the original distraction was.

How to Do Classroom Observations

Doing classroom observations of individual children does not require any special reorganization of your classroom management practices. Neither does it require an excessive amount of time (three to five minutes each time you do an observation). It is better to do several shorter observations of the same child, rather than one long one. The main adjustment you may have to make is to train your class to work by themselves, not seeking your help. This is a practice that has virtues apart from enabling you to observe children. The more children are able to work without directives, the more they are able to become responsible for their own learning.

The goal of these observations is quite specific: You observe a child so you can identify the critical self-esteem condition that is keeping a child from being able to perform successfully in the classroom. Once you know this condition, you can select specific tactics to increase self-esteem, which in turn will change the child's behavior.

Identifying the Critical Condition

What are you to look for in order to determine which self-esteem condition is critical? Remember the critical condition is the one that must be worked on in order to enhance a child's self-esteem.

There are four Personal Arena behavior checklists at the back of this chapter. Review the checklists to help you identify and understand behavior associated with each of the four conditions.

Here are some general principles to keep in mind as you use the checklists:

- When children have low self-esteem, one condition will prove to be the critical one that must be worked on before self-esteem can change. The critical condition is assessed by observation.

- It is not necessary for children to show *every* behavior within a condition in order for it to be the critical one.
- Observers will note behavior that also indicates problems in the other self-esteem conditions. This is to be expected, since problems with self-esteem tend to have a pervasive effect on children's behavior. The critical condition acts like an anchor, holding back the development of overall self-esteem, resulting in deficits showing up in several conditions.
- As you identify patterns in a child's behavior you will see that behaviors indicative of several conditions will show up in the pattern, although the critical condition will be most apparent. Any particular behavior, taken alone, may represent different conditions. The critical condition rises out of the pattern in which discrete behaviors are embedded.

Use the Personal Arena Behavioral Checklists to judge the following factors:

Number. The critical condition will be indicated by the relatively large number of index behaviors that children demonstrate. More of the problem behaviors will be observable.

Frequency. The critical condition will be indicated by the greater frequency of index behavior in children's repertoire. They will do more of the things indicating a problem more often.

Intensity. The critical condition will be indicated by the emotional intensity surrounding the index behavior. Children will be more tense, cry more often or express an inordinate amount of anger when showing the problem behaviors of the critical condition.

Observing children is a fundamental skill for those who have chosen to work with them. I do "kid-watching" at the beach, in supermarkets and in many other situations. It's amazing what one can see! But, more important, much of what we know about children's development and needs has come to us from such intrepid kid-watchers as Jean Piaget, Erik Frikson, Robert Coles, Clark Moustakas and Donald Winnicott. Not bad company to keep!

Step 1—Prepare the Class to Leave You Alone

Before you begin to do observations, you will need to train your class to leave you alone for brief periods. This training should be done for several weeks before you attempt to do any observations. You can begin this training at any time during the school year. Most teachers report that it takes a class one to two weeks to become adapted to this practice. Here are some suggestions:

- Make a "Do Not Disturb" sign. Tell children when the sign is displayed on your desk, no one is to interrupt you.
- Place a small battery operated light on your desk. Tell the class when it is lit, they should not disturb you.
- Talk with the class about how they feel about being able to do something without being disturbed. Claim a similar privilege for yourself.
- Bring a funny hat to class. Tell the class that you are not to be disturbed when you're wearing it.
- When you are planning not to be disturbed, assign some brief task the class can do without bothering you (workbooks, free art, silent reading).
- Tell them you don't wish to be disturbed for only a brief

period—five minutes. Most requests (including needing to go the restroom) can wait for five minutes.

- When children disturb you during this period, point to the sign, candle or hat, but do not respond verbally.
- Do the above at least twice a day when you are training your class, and have something to do showing you are busy.
- During this training period, gradually spend more time sitting at your desk watching the class. Within a few weeks you will be able to spend five minutes watching your class without being disturbed and the children will feel as if you've been doing it forever.

Step 2—Review the Personal Arena Behavior Checklists

The Personal Arena Behavioral Checklists can be used in a number of ways:

- They can help you develop a general orientation to the types of behavior characteristic of problems with each of the four conditions. Notice that, while the checklists indicate discriminable behaviors, they also tend to "clump." Connectiveness behaviors tend to be about relationship matters; Uniqueness behaviors tend to be about functional and dysfunctional self-expression; Power behaviors tend to be about control matters; Models behaviors tend to be about learning and understanding.
- You can sit at your desk or at home, imagine a child in your mind's eye and use the list as a way of organizing the experiences you have had with him or her. If you are very familiar with the child, you may not have to do a formal observation.

- You can review the checklists after doing a series of observations and find the behaviors most closely representing what you saw in the classroom.
- You can have several people who are familiar with the child review the checklists, indicating the most problematic behaviors they have observed. This is a way of considering the observations of several colleagues.
- You can set up a weighting scheme for completing the checklist. This can help you sort out observations that may be ambiguous, especially when you are learning how to do observations using the Behavioral Checklists. Children who have relatively severe emotional problems may demonstrate problem behaviors in several self-esteem conditions with high intensity, which can be confusing if you have not yet developed a good familiarity with the material.

Assign a score to each behavior on all the lists, average the scores for each condition and identify the relative ranking of the conditions. If more than one person observes, weighted scores facilitate comparisons and you can tell whether the child is acting differently for different teachers, which would indicate a high influence of the environment on the child's behavior. The following is a suggested weighting scheme:

- Assign a score of 5 if the Frequency/Intensity of the item is very high.
- Assign a score of 3 if the Frequency/Intensity of the item is moderate.
- Assign a score of 1 if the child rarely or never demonstrates the behavior.

Step 3—Do a Practice Observation

The first time you do classroom observations, take a few practice sessions before focusing on problem children. Select a child for the practice who is *not* a problem. One whom you know fairly well and like. Do two or three observations of this child. See if you notice anything about the child you didn't notice before. Use the behavioral checklists at the end of this chapter as guides for what to look for.

Step 4—Select a Child to Observe

When you feel ready to observe a child who has self-esteem problems, pick one who tends to be assertive, active and energetic. This child will give you more to look at and take note of. Shy, withdrawn or passive children will not seem, at first, to "behave" very much. You can easily become bored and feel there's not much to see.

Step 5—Have the Right Materials and Sit in the Right Place

Have pencils or pen handy. Use small pieces of paper, no larger than four by six inches. This will force you to be brief. Have a comfortable, solid surface on which to write.

Sit in a position where you can see a child's whole body, including the feet and legs, even if they're under the desk. You also want to be able to see facial expressions.

You need to mask, through your own behavior, that you are observing someone. Children with Connectiveness problems are especially sensitive; they may wonder what you're doing and whether it has anything to do with them. They may watch you when you're trying to watch them!

Sit so your body is not oriented toward the child you're observing. Move your head and eyes frequently, look at different parts of the room, scan across the child and observe out of the corner of your eye as much as possible. You can pay more direct attention if the child is not paying attention to you.

Step 6—Decide What to Write About

This can be a challenging part of the observation, since you will want to write things that are "meaningful." You will be tempted to analyze and to label the behavior in some way. You will not be sure what you should be attending to. Don't think about it too much. Here's what to do:

- Describe, as much as possible, everything you see the child do.
- Indicate how the child's behavior is making you feel at some points in the observation.
- Note any unusual ideas or intuitions you have about the child as you're observing. Such ideas or intuitions may be in the form of questions: *Wonder if she eats breakfast?*
- Make your notes brief, using some shorthand notation system, so that you can write more things you see, without long descriptions. Practice writing without looking at the paper.
- Make note of things happening that seem to affect the child: *Noise from outside startles; Danny says something to him—he disregards; Joe walks past desk, says something*

Step 7—Know What to Look For

Describe everything you can about what the child does. Don't be selective. Here are some examples of things to observe:

Examples of Things to Observe

Look at	*What You Might See and Describe*
Child's face	Makes movement with mouth, frowns, smiles, makes faces, expressionless, squints eyes, licks lips, closes eyes.
Behavior	Swings feet under desk, sits on foot, puts fingers in mouth, picks nose, arms hang loosely, hands inside desk, feet under chair, drums fingers on desk, hits head with fist.
How child handles objects	Pencil in mouth, rips paper, holds book in both hands, crayons in neat pile, has jacket on, pulls hat over eyes, holds guinea pig tightly.
Child's interaction with others	Talks quietly to Sam, punches Sara, stares at Juan, looks directly at Joy when talking, disregards Joe's question, takes paper from Alan, hands pencil to Rachel.
How child does something	Looks at picture intently, makes idle marks in book, sits quietly, flips through book, distracted by laughter, rocks gently.

Write the entire time, unless the child is in repose for long periods. Here is a sample observation:

A Sample Observation

Mary Louise, Monday, 5/23, 9:15-9:20

sitting at desk with math book
pencil in hand
sitting on leg
left hand curling hair
looks at page intently
looks at other page
watches Sara, looks back to own book
writes in workbook
puts finger in mouth
begins to do problems
counts on fingers
smiles to self, puts number down on page
works with face close to book
she's actually working!!!!!
does next problem without counting
Is she really trying?????
looks across room at kids on rug
looks back to page in workbook
taps foot under seat
completes another problem
John comes, takes eraser from her desk
she says to give it back, loudly
he does, makes remark
she stares at him as he goes back to his seat
fingers in hair
still staring at John
puts pencil in mouth
still looking at John
pushes workbook to edge of desk
looks at John
puts pencil on desk
fingers in mouth
looks around room, stares at me
looks away
takes ribbon from desk
begins to play with ribbon
not working at all

Step 8—Do Three or Four Observations

Do three or four observations of the same child over a period of a few days. Each observation should only be three to five minutes long. Do them at different times of the day, while the child is engaged in different activities. Set the observations aside until you have completed all of them.

Step 9—Making Sense of What You Observe

It is now time to make sense of what you observed. You may have confirmed your intuition about which condition of self-esteem is the critical one to work on. You may already have picked up a few clues about what you might do to break some dysfunctional behavior patterns.

Review your notes and ask yourself these questions:

- Did I see anything about this child I hadn't noticed before?
- What did I see that confirmed my previous judgments about the child?
- What things seem to help this child stay on task?
- What things happened during the observations that seemed to distract the child from staying on task?
- What kinds of interactions did this child have with others?
- How does this child show signs of being anxious or insecure? What seemed to make the child anxious during the observation?
- What could I have done to reduce the anxiety or head it off, if I had been able to intervene?
- Is there any pattern or sequence in these observations—a series of events that seem to result in the same inappropriate behavior in different situations?
- Based on my observations, which self-esteem condition seems to be the critical one?

Step 10—Analyzing the Observation

The following analysis shows how you might go about analyzing your observations and concluding which condition is the critical one. Over time, you will come up with your own method.

There are three major things to look for among the many behaviors that you will observe:

1. Look for significant "breaks," where behavior shifts from one kind to another.
2. Look for signs of anxiety or discomfort and identify events that may have caused them.
3. Identify major distractions and watch for the effect they have on the child's ability to stay on-task.

A Sample Analysis

An Analysis of the Observation of Mary Louise

sitting at desk with math book
pencil in hand
sitting on leg
* left hand curling hair
* looks at page intently
looks at other page
watches Sara, looks back to own book
writes in workbook
* puts finger in mouth
begins to do problems
counts on fingers
smiles to self, puts number down on page
* works with face close to book
she's actually working!!!!!
does next problem without counting
Is she really trying?????
looks across room at kids on rug
looks back to page in workbook
* taps foot under seat

completes another problem
John comes, takes eraser from her desk
+ she says to give it back, loudly
he does, makes remark
she stares at him as he goes back to his seat
* fingers in hair
still staring at John
* puts pencil in mouth
still looking at John
pushes workbook to edge of desk
looks at John
puts pencil on desk
* fingers in mouth
looks around room, stares at me
looks away
x takes ribbon from desk
begins to play with ribbon
not working at all

Mary Louise has problems with her Sense of Connectiveness. This observation shows how her behavior deteriorates from initially focusing on the work with some success to final distraction.

The underlined items show how she increasingly pays attention to what others are doing. The items with asterisks (*) are anxiety symptoms, often associated with looking at others. The item with the plus sign (+) suggests she doesn't handle interactions well and is not forthcoming to others. The item with the "x" shows that after a series of "eye connections" with others, she retreats to playing with an object. This is characteristic of low Connectiveness children, who do so at the end of a sequence of behavior similar to what Mary Louise exhibited.

Any particular behavior may mean something different for different children. A behavior is meaningful with respect to the pattern or sequence of behavior in which it is embedded. You are looking for patterns or repetitions of behaviors. An individual event is not meaningful in most instances. As you get to know children, you will understand what a behavior means for each individual child.

The table on page 63 shows some other examples of ways to interpret behavior.

Planning What to Do

An observation is successful if you can find at least one new thing you can do with a child that will promote functional, appropriate behavior. The next four chapters will give specific suggestions for enhancing each of the four conditions. This may mean doing some of the following things:

- Planning a special activity for the child that enhances the critical condition of self-esteem.

Some Ways to Interpret Behavior

Observed Behavior	***Apparent Meaning***	***Other Possible Meanings***
Lays head on arm on desk.	Child is tired.	Child is anxious, thinking about the problem, surreptitiously wiping nose on sleeve, finished with the task, looking at another child.
Stares out of window.	Child is bored.	Child is interested in what's outside, thinking, in reveries, avoiding contact with someone.
Clamps jaw and frowns.	Child finds the work too difficult.	Child is having a fantasy, angry about something he or she thought, feeling his or her teeth, needs an eraser.

- Planning an activity for the whole class, with this child (and others with similar problems) in mind, that enhances the critical condition of self-esteem.
- Moving the child's seat in the room.
- Finding ways to reduce anxiety during critical points in the behavior sequence by touching, holding, talking or making eye contact with the child.
- Having another teacher (psychologist, resource teacher) observe the child and help you think through a plan of action.
- Finding other ways to intervene in the dysfunctional behavioral sequence.
- Altering your expectations of the child's productivity and increasing or decreasing your requirements.
- Paying attention to the child's successful efforts and acknowledging them more frequently.

If you have child study teams in your school or the opportunity to engage others in planning for a specific child, you are fortunate and your planning will be enriched. If others have observed the child and you're able to compare observations, your planning can become more comprehensive. If you can engage others who interact with the child in helping to strengthen the critical condition you will see more rapid changes in the child's performance. If you have confirmed your original intuition about the child through this process, you can trust yourself more to make good judgments about what children need. You're well on your way to becoming a "kid-watcher"!

Connectiveness

Personal Arena Behavior Checklist

☐ Is easily distracted and spends much time watching others in many different settings.

☐ When allowed to choose seating will elect to sit near doors, walls or at the periphery of the group.

☐ Wears excessive clothing, relative to the activity or the temperature. Doesn't like to remove hat, jacket or other outdoor apparel when indoors.

☐ Does not communicate easily and is unable to listen to others and understand their viewpoint.

☐ Is shy, has few or no friends, and actively avoids social situations. Is unaware of others' interests or needs.

☐ Talks negatively about family or ethnic group.

☐ Seldom, if ever, volunteers to help others.

☐ Is disliked by peers.

☐ Acts uncomfortable around adults, or else constantly seeks their attention.

☐ Always wants to be in the center of things, and/or constantly tries to be noticed.

☐ More often relates to things or animals rather than people. Carries a lot of "stuff" around in pockets and bags, and values it excessively. Spends a lot of time with pets, takes them to bed and so on.

☐ Has trouble stating ideas and feelings directly and asking for needs.

☐ Is uncomfortable about touching others or being touched.

☐ Makes others uncomfortable when touching them. Doesn't have the "appropriate touch" in many situations.

Uniqueness

Personal Arena Behavior Checklist

- ☐ Seems to be in reverie frequently. Stares abstractedly at walls or ceilings while not paying attention.
- ☐ Seems to talk to self or make noticeable noises.
- ☐ Speaks negatively about self and accomplishments frequently.
- ☐ Takes little or no pride in appearance.
- ☐ Shows little imagination. Rarely comes up with original ideas, but they are quite unusual if and when they do appear.
- ☐ Demonstrates little regard for own ideas, interests or abilities. Rarely expresses an opinion or feeling different from what others have expressed.
- ☐ Does things as told, rarely improvises.
- ☐ Is uncomfortable when called on or singled out.
- ☐ Seeks praise and recognition often, but becomes embarrassed, denies or disregards recognition when it is given.
- ☐ Shows off when it is inappropriate.
- ☐ Usually conforms to others' wishes or ideas, particularly peers'. Is a follower, and rarely, if ever, a leader.
- ☐ Interacts with others in an awkward and mechanical way, categorizing people in simplistic terms and being critical of their personal characteristics. Tries to find ways to be like others, rather than accept differences.
- ☐ Rarely, if ever, takes delight in personal accomplishments, even if the accomplishment results in praise or recognition from others.

Power

Personal Arena Behavior Checklist

☐ Avoids taking responsibility. Will not initiate needed projects on own and will have to be reminded about required duties.

☐ Shies away from challenging tasks and won't take risks in areas where judgments may be made about success or failure.

☐ Has limited skills in many areas and does not actively pursue improving skills.

☐ Has poor control over body. Is often awkward or physically inept at common tasks, although may have prowess in some sports.

☐ Frequently acts helpless and gives up on tasks, even simple ones, when obstacles, even minor ones, occur.

☐ Avoids being in charge of others.

☐ Lacks emotional self-control. Anger, fear, hysteria, inability to deal with frustrations, crying and depression occur easily, often in combination with each other.

☐ Always wants to be the leader or have own way, but will do so in a way leading to failure or conflict. Will lead in such a way that others must take responsibility in order to avoid failure.

☐ Shows resistance to directives through foot-dragging, avoidance and denial.

☐ Avoids stating needs and interests assertively and often goes along with others, especially when they have strong opinions or ideas.

☐ Is often stubborn and resistant in situations in which no threat or possibility of failure is imminent.

☐ Blames others for things that are obviously not their responsibility whenever failure or problems occur.

Models

Personal Arena Behavior Checklist

- ☐ Gets confused easily and wastes time with apparently aimless activity.
- ☐ Becomes obsessively involved with activities that are unrelated to the task at hand.
- ☐ Is poorly organized both in thinking and behavior.
- ☐ Is confused easily about what is right and wrong.
- ☐ Has a difficult time deciding what to do or say, even in situations that should be quite familiar.
- ☐ Responds to instruction and directions in resistant manner that is always associated with confusion or ambivalence.
- ☐ Is unsure about methods and purposes that are associated with an activity.
- ☐ Will continually seek directions or insist there is only one way to do something, persisting obsessively in doing it that way, despite failure.
- ☐ Has rigid standards and tends to get upset easily when others don't conform to those standards.
- ☐ Avoids or acts awkwardly in social situations requiring some formal etiquette.
- ☐ Doesn't respond well to instruction and expects not to know what is going on.

Chapter

4

Building Children's Sense of Connectiveness

In order to have a high Sense of Connectiveness, children must be able to gain satisfaction from the people, places and things they feel connected to. The importance of these people, places and things must be affirmed by the adults whom children look up to.

This chapter will enable you to understand how the Sense of Connectiveness is formed in children and what undermines it. You will learn the basic, essential strategy for raising the Sense of Connectiveness in children as well as many one-to-one methods for doing so. Classroom and all-school activities that enhance and maintain the Sense of Connectiveness are described at the end of the chapter.

How Children Develop Their Sense of Connectiveness

Children's Sense of Connectiveness begins to be formed at birth. There is even evidence that intra-uterine experience may influence receptivity to social stimulation after birth. Erik Erikson, in his work *Childhood and Society,* identified infancy as the stage in which children's capacity for trust was formed.[1]

Trusting is the critical index for a person's ability to relate effectively to others, since it is a necessary condition for being open, vulnerable, empathetic and able to permit others to have a significant impact on one's feelings. Children who can trust have a high Sense of Connectiveness; children who can't have a low Sense of Connectiveness.

Two major factors influence whether children will have a high or low Sense of Connectiveness, and both result from their earliest experiences in their families:

1. The degree to which a consistent context of warmth, affection, good communication and satisfying relationships exist in children's ongoing experience.
2. The degree to which children have experienced severe emotional losses in their early experience, and whether those losses have been repaired.

All families do things that make children feel loved, wanted and safe. All families also do things that make children feel unloved, unwanted and unsafe. Such is life! "Good" families do more of the former (by far). "Bad" families do more of the latter (by far).

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[1] Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1964.)

The following table shows some of the ways families influence children's Sense of Connectiveness:

How Families Influence Connectiveness

Families that build Connectiveness do more of these things	***Families that lower Connectiveness do more of these things***
Communicate well and often.	Communicate poorly and insufficiently.
Express warmth and affection verbally and physically.	Set limits on demonstrating warmth and affection.
Get each other's attention easily, without intense emotional displays.	Set conditions and barriers to getting attention from each other.
Have good ways to resolve interpersonal conflict.	Don't resolve conflict.
Make satisfying decisions.	Use authoritarian decision strategies.
Emphasize humor and fun, and tolerate "wasting time."	Emphasize discipline, duty and responsibility.

Families that build Connectiveness are different from families that lower it only in degree. But that degree is very important to children's self-esteem! Every family has bad days, not everyone in the family is treated the same at all times, and the parents' level of Connectiveness often determines how much of that condition their children will have, no matter what their wishes or intentions may be. Families that build the Sense of Connectiveness in their members quickly "fix" those things lowering Connectiveness, so that even the bad days don't have a lasting effect.

But there are many fine, loving and warm families in which one or more children have Connectiveness problems. Most teachers have run into them; parents who are desperate to help a child become more friendly, open and companionable because they are that way themselves. Which brings us to the second factor that can undermine the Sense of Connectiveness, even in good families: severe emotional losses that have not been repaired.

Experiencing loss occurs frequently. People leave, move, misplace things, and others come along who reduce our ability to keep things we formerly had. When any loss occurs at a moment of emotional vulnerability, it has a severe impact on the Sense of Connectiveness. This is why children can react so dramatically to the loss of seemingly unimportant objects, like sticks or old, beat-up toys. They have established emotional attachments to these things, even if significant adults don't know it.

Here is a partial list of things about which children can experience a feeling of loss:

- Death, divorce, separation and unresolved interpersonal disputes can result in strong mourning feelings in children. How much they were emotionally attached to the person who is gone determines the strength of the loss.
- Moving can result in the loss of friends, a house, a room and familiar environmental factors such as trees or hiding places.
- New siblings can result in the loss of a room, other physical space, parents' time and attention, material resources and a central role in the family's activities.
- Losing a pet can have as severe an impact as the loss of a grandparent, uncle or close family friend.
- Attachment to a possession depends on where it was acquired, from whom and the meaning attached to it. This is why seemingly valueless things, like sticks or

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rocks, become incredibly important to a child. When they are inadvertently destroyed or tossed away, the child goes into true mourning.

- When valued toys or possessions are taken or destroyed by other children it can have a severe effect, amplified if parental insistence on "sharing" was seen by the child as instigating the loss.

Adults are not privy to many of the people, places and things to which children form close emotional attachments. These attachments are internal, and children don't talk about them much. Teachers and parents will frequently not be aware of the degree of children's attachment to things and people in their lives. It's hard to know what to fix if you don't know what's broken! This is why children from warm and loving families can develop a chronic low Sense of Connectiveness as a result of a severe loss not having been adequately repaired.

Loss breeds mistrust in children. Children who have people places and things that provide satisfaction to them, tend to take these things for granted. They see these things as "universal verities," things that were, are and will always be there, like Mom and Dad.

An emotional loss shakes up the degree to which children can trust that the universal verities are unassailable. This fundamental loss of trust in "things as they are" undermines the Sense of Connectiveness.

Fortunately the Sense of Connectiveness can be fixed if you can spot the symptoms and select the right tactics for doing so. Teachers can often increase Connectiveness in the classroom, even if the source of the problem is in the home. It becomes harder to do, though, as children get older.

Essential Strategy: Reach Out When It's Not Expected

The material on the Interpersonal and the Group Arena in this chapter provides many specific tactics that you can employ in dealing with low Connectiveness children alone or in groups. But there is a fundamental strategy infusing all of them to keep in mind: In order to build or repair children's Sense of Connectiveness you must reach out to them when they are not expecting or demanding your attention, and you must do so in a way that does not require them to respond in any substantial way.

Reach Out

You can reach out to children in many ways:

- Speak to them.
- Touch them.
- Gesture toward them.
- Smile at them.
- Hug them.
- Leave notes for them.
- Talk about them within their hearing.
- Make funny faces at them.
- Do any of the above up close or at a distance.

Teachers who build the Sense of Connectiveness do many of these things, in different combinations for different kids, all day long. If you like kids, they're fun to do.

When They Don't Expect Attention

When children with Connectiveness problems seek or demand attention and get it, it reinforces the unconscious assumption they must do something to get people to pay attention to them. Children who are highly withdrawn or very shy (severe Connectiveness problems) act as if they want people to leave them alone, and are finally accommodated in that wish, since they respond so strangely and inappropriately to friendly overtures.

Reaching out to low Connectiveness children when they aren't expecting you to has a powerful effect because they presume that you're doing it because you like them. They may initially mistrust your motives, but they have such a strong wish to feel loved that the mistrust may soon diminish, especially in the early grades.

They will be watching and counting, though, to see if you keep it up, and whether you reach out more to others than to them. Don't play with their feelings! You may sometimes need to reach out when you don't want to.

When they are working, quickly touch them as you pass, say their names and give them an okay signal. You will note, if you watch, that they go back to work quickly, with lowered anxiety.

You will need to remind yourself in most instances to do this, because when low Connectiveness children are not acting like pests, you tend to overlook them and may even enjoy having a vacation from their continuous emotional attention seeking. Also, since they are so easily distracted, when they are working you may not want to disturb their fragile attention to the task. Do it anyway.

Don't Require Them to Respond

Children with a low Sense of Connectiveness often act quite uncomfortable when you try to relate to them. They either withdraw or act inappropriately, since they have poor relationship skills. Their inappropriate responses may disappoint people who reach out to them, and elicit some subtle or overt sign of disapproval. This is why you run the risk of increasing the problem when you want to get a response from a low Connectiveness child, even though you have the best intentions.

Low Connectiveness children's desperate need to connect with people is frustrated by their own characteristics and the effect they have on others. They want to be loved, touched and attended to. They want to feel they are valued members of a group, as if they have a high Sense of Connectiveness, but they can't.

Their problem is not that they don't like the things loving concerned people do to them, it's that they don't know how to respond, and are anxious they will do something to drive the person away again.

Theirs is a terrible dilemma. The best thing you can do is find ways to reach out to them and not require them to respond to you.

Here are some suggestions:

- Don't force them to make eye contact with you; it's too intimate a connection for many low Connectiveness children.
- If you touch them (physically) don't leave your hand on them long, and quickly move away from them (the old "touch and run" technique).
- Make statements to them rather than asking questions,

especially about personal matters, since you may have to ask questions about curriculum matters.

- Don't look at them persistently, while they are aware of you. They can't disregard it and will be distracted by it. When you look at low Connectiveness children for more than a second or two, they feel as if they have to do or say something.

As you reach out to low Connectiveness children without requiring a response, they will gradually become more comfortable with you, less anxious and trust you more. They may even become forthcoming in appropriate ways, as they begin to feel that you are more of a friend than a threat.

Their ability to stay on task without distraction for longer periods of time will increase, sometimes dramatically, and that is what you want to have happen, since they can't have satisfying learning experiences without this ability.

The Interpersonal Arena

You will recall that you can have a positive effect on children's self-esteem through one-to-one encounters in the Interpersonal Arena. One-to-one techniques will work if used persistently with children who have problems with each self-esteem condition.

Low Connectiveness children require special attention from you because they tend to "disappear" for one of two reasons. They will be overlooked when working appropriately and on task, not making demands of time and attention from you and other children, or they will be overlooked because they are so withdrawn they make little impact on their environment.

Many teachers find it useful to make notes to remind themselves to interact consistently with low Connectiveness children. Consistency is more important than frequency, so your initiatives only have to happen two to four times each day in order to have an effect.

Building the Sense of Connectiveness is not easy. Children with low Connectiveness don't trust easily or for long. Persistence is more important for this condition than others, because you must seek to systematically break down children's mistrust of you and their environment.

Their mistrust may have been built up over years of being handled inappropriately. The source of their mistrust may be very deep. You need to commit yourself to several weeks of consistent effort before you will see significant results, although you will quickly see some evidence of children's response in subtle ways, if you're a good observer.

Interpersonal Arena Techniques for Building Connectiveness

There are a number of strategies you can use to build children's Sense of Connectiveness:

- Show affection directly, often through brief, undemanding physical contact (e.g., patting shoulders, touching hands).
- Show approval when behavior justifies it, even though the children have previously done something to elicit criticism.
- Be public with praise, saying positive things about the children or their performance so others can hear, but don't require them to become the center of attention if they show discomfort.
- Let children know when they have contributed to the overall progress of the group or class. Make such comments public and let others know about the contribution.

- Share your own feelings, even though the children may disparage or criticize them.
- Share your interests, hobbies and activities, even though the children may not indicate interest.
- Show approval in some way when you notice the children have related well to others.
- Listen non-judgmentally, as much as possible. Do not feel everything children say needs to be commented on, agreed or disagreed with, criticized or praised.
- Respect children's relationships with friends and provide opportunities for friends to work together as well as encouraging new relationships.
- Spend time alone with children when other classmates are not present.
- Find ways to do something special with children that satisfies their particular interests or needs.
- Use indirect methods of communicating, such as leaving notes in books or special personal comments on returned assignments.
- Respect children's need to have object relations when interpersonal ones are troubling, so that children will not be prematurely sanctioned for playing with something while trying to work.

The Group Arena

Children with a low Sense of Connectiveness benefit from being in classrooms where there is a strong emphasis on building this condition of self-esteem. This is because such classrooms (or schools) feel safer and less intimidating. Children can find more opportunities to relate to someone or something with a high degree of satisfaction. The way anxiety manifests in them is understood and taken into consideration.

When people around them are happy and satisfied, children with a low Sense of Connectiveness tend to be more comfortable and relate better; other children do not set them off as easily or as frequently.

Group Arena Connectiveness practices are meant to build a feeling of inclusion in the classroom or school. The goal is to help children feel they are part of something, without their having to work hard to be included.

Children's need to feel emotionally as well as physically safe is very important, so clear and consistent rules and regulations are helpful in building a Sense of Connectiveness. When children feel comfortable and safe in a school classroom, they have more time, energy and attention available for learning tasks.

Doing things to build and support the Sense of Connectiveness is good for children with high or low self-esteem. Children with a high Sense of Connectiveness feel comfortable and safe because the room feels familiar, much like home where their strong feelings of connection became formed and are maintained.

Children with a low Sense of Connectiveness feel that school is a respite from home life, which may be troublesome or lacking in the simple affections they unconsciously seek. You can't go wrong by building Connectiveness in your classroom or school.

If you have children from divorced, reconstituted or transient families, unsafe neighborhoods, families with incompetent parent figures, or many at-risk children in foster care, working on the Sense of Connectiveness is required if the academic program is to have any chance of success.

School can become a haven for such children, but you will have to work with firm, singleminded attention to build a good climate. It may seem fruitless and nearly impossible in some circumstances, but if you can develop a good feeling of connection and inclusion in each classroom and the school as a whole, you can make school a safe place for troubled children. In many cases it's the only thing to do!

Group Arena Techniques for Building Connectiveness

The following techniques are applicable both for classrooms and the school as a whole:

- Create opportunities for children to share personal experiences with each other.
- Develop cooperative learning or group tasks which require children to work together in order to complete them successfully.
- Have class or group meetings in which problems are discussed and decisions made. Help children learn effective group and interpersonal skills that facilitate problem solving and decision making.
- Create activities in which the entire class or group can participate, such as projects, sports, plays and service activities.
- Develop alternative relationship opportunities, remembering that children connect to people, places and things. A "calming teddy bear" children can hold when feeling anxious, a "safe desk" children can sit at when feeling unsafe in relationship to others, and a "time-out" space or room children can visit when relations are becoming problematic are some possibilities.
- Emphasize service to others in the classroom or group and provide many opportunities for the group to engage in service activities in the school or community.

- Have occasions in which the focus is on the families or cultural and ethnic associations of the class or group. Provide opportunities for children to focus on their own heritage.
- Create opportunities for children to identify with the school or organization through activities that enhance such identification. Engage children in planning and carrying out such activities.
- Organize learning teams so associations around the work of the class or group become normal and natural.
- Increase the number of special events, parties and outings that the class or group is responsible for.
- De-emphasize individuality and autonomy while emphasizing cooperation and teamwork. Do not be put off or embarrassed by being disparaged. Recognize that avoiding being cooperative is more often a result of lack of skill in cooperative behavior than a rejection of it.
- Have clear and consistent relationship standards, with appropriate displays and reminders. Have positive standards "Be Helpful to Others" as well as negative ones "No Fighting".

A Key Connectiveness Issue: Building Cooperation

Apart from its functional value in enabling children to get more things done better and faster, cooperation is important because it provides feelings of satisfaction to the members of a cooperative work/play group.

The Sense of Connectiveness, the feeling, is what makes the issue of cooperation so important. Most people can attest to the stresses and bad feelings occurring in group situations where cooperation is not practiced well.

Let's develop a working definition of cooperation. It's the process by which people work together, with goodwill, toward a common goal or purpose. So, cooperation consists of the following elements:

- There's work involved.
- It's done in a climate of goodwill.
- There is a common goal or purpose.

That all sounds great, but why then is it so hard at times to build a cooperative atmosphere? The truth is there is a downside to cooperation that must be considered when trying to build an atmosphere in which it is easily practiced.

People have to give something up to participate in a cooperative effort. Unbridled individualism just won't work. In a classroom, children have to be able to restrain their desire to exercise their individual natures. Some people just don't seem to be cut out for cooperative effort.

Some degree of control has to be given up in order to make cooperation work, since a group consensus model replaces individual decision making. Some children have difficulty giving up control, fearing that loss of it is an invasion of their integrity or safety.

The group processes required for effective cooperation are complex and sophisticated. Communication is a critical element. So is the ability to sense group mood. Seeing the whole process (including the goal) while carrying out one small part of the task can be a daunting experience. American industry invests tens of millions of dollars yearly to teach *adults* the techniques of cooperative work effort. Is it any wonder children find it hard to do?

This is why the second factor in the definition—a climate of goodwill—is so important. Goodwill has to do with the way people feel about what they are doing in a cooperative group. Goodwill is an index of satisfaction with the group's progress and process. In this regard it is closely tied to the Sense of Connectiveness.

Children with a high Sense of Connectiveness will more easily be able to find satisfaction in cooperative group effort. Children with a low Sense of Connectiveness will have great difficulty gaining such satisfaction, despite having learned, consciously, the skills required for effective group participation. This is why it is so important to build Connectiveness before expecting that cooperation will be avidly practiced in a classroom or school.

It is much easier to build cooperation when people have a good Sense of Connectiveness. It makes it easier for them to learn the skills that are required if they anticipate they will be experiencing a high degree of satisfaction from using those skills. As you have seen before, children with low Connectiveness don't anticipate such satisfaction. On the contrary, they presume group interaction will provoke fear and discomfort in themselves.

Learning how to cooperate, in itself, doesn't build the Sense of Connectiveness. But building Connectiveness can be an important pre-condition to building a cooperative learning environment in a classroom or school. If you are lucky, most of the children with a high Sense of Connectiveness will be able to act cooperatively with relative ease, only needing to learn a few new skills. Their attitude is already appropriate.

Children with a low Sense of Connectiveness are likely to have difficulty contributing to a cooperative atmosphere and profiting from it. It only takes a few low Connectiveness children to undermine the cooperative atmosphere; and they become even more isolated if they have to be separated in some manner in order for the group to move forward. Cooperation only grows more distasteful for such children.

Learning to cooperate is a very important skill for children to have and can make all the difference to their future success. Children with a low Sense of Connectiveness offer a challenge in the same way that any child who has difficulty learning something does. Building their Sense of Connectiveness provides the emotional context necessary for them to learn the skills of cooperation with comfort and satisfaction.

Using Connectiveness Activities

Activities promoting the Sense of Connectiveness in groups and the classroom all have the same features, although the content may vary from subject to subject. The Connectiveness activities in this chapter are offered as examples that can stimulate your own creativity.

If you are already doing things to promote a Sense of Connectiveness in the Group Arena, these activities may shed light on why they work so well. Here are some important issues that should influence how you go about designing Connectiveness activities in the Group Arena:

- Children respond differently to group activities based on the strength of their Sense of Connectiveness. Children with high Connectiveness enjoy group activities because they have a history of experiencing satisfaction from them. The contrary is true for children with a low Sense of Connectiveness. Therefore, the goal for Connectiveness activities is to increase the likelihood that low Connectiveness children will gain satisfaction from the experience.

- Stress increases for low Connectiveness children as the group size increases, up to the point where the group is so large that anonymity is possible. Therefore, in order to increase success, the size of the group is important. Avoid groups of three whenever possible, since the low Connectiveness child in such a group tends to isolate from the other two children. Four or five is the best number for work groups, considering the needs of low Connectiveness children. Larger groups begin to stimulate anxiety or withdrawal.
- Low Connectiveness children suffer from not feeling included. Work groups are more comfortable for them when each member has a clearly specified job or task. This insures that the group's success depends on all members doing their share of the work. Leaving this ambiguous becomes a problem that is hard for low Connectiveness children to solve.
- The opportunity for satisfaction in group work is highest when you make sure children can achieve success through a specific individual effort. At the same time, the group product results in feelings of pride of participation.
- Success in group work means the group achieves its objective. If the objective is unclear the group will not know whether it has been achieved. This is most obvious, for example, in team sports, where achieving a higher score is a clear indication of success. In noncompetitive academic situations, more effort is required to clarify to children exactly what the group is expected to do.
- In some situations, such as sports, intragroup cooperation and intergroup competition go hand in hand. However, an important distinction should be under-

stood: Winning or losing is not a Connectiveness issue, it is a Power issue, and should not be confused with how the Sense of Connectiveness is enhanced. Intergroup competition is not bad in some instances, but is not a method for building the Sense of Connectiveness.

- The risk level in Connectiveness activities has to do with the degree of involvement required. Low Connectiveness children become threatened by the need for involvement sooner than high Connectiveness children. In designing activities to promote the Sense of Connectiveness, lower risk by clarifying group rules and procedures, laying out the distribution of labor beforehand, specifying how success will be judged, and finding ways to accept a broad range of outcomes.

Connectiveness Activities

The following activities build the Sense of Connectiveness:

A Class Party

Having fun together helps children relate to each other more easily. Planning, anticipating and preparing class parties provide lots of opportunities for good feelings and cooperative activity among the students. Have lots of parties. It isn't necessary to have a special reason for one!

Conversation Pit

Have a section of the classroom set aside for conversations among the children. Have comfortable furniture, a rug, some pillows. Establish rules and conditions for using the space during class time that limit it to this purpose.

What Do We Have in Common?

Divide the class into small teams of four to five students. Each team makes a list of the things its members have in common. They can use any factors: family life, clothing, ethnicity, sports, likes/dislikes, homes. Give prizes to each team for something (e.g., most items, most unusual item, most family items). Post the lists for a time and use the items as the basis for spelling exercises.

Friendly-Grams

Design a blank form called the Friendly-Gram. Hand out a stack of them to all children in the class. Children write as many as they can to other members of the class in a given time period. They must write something nice or positive. Children share delivering the Friendly-Grams and the teacher should do them too. Have Friendly-Grams available at other times for individuals to use and use them yourself, frequently.

In addition to building Connectiveness, the following activities also build the Sense of Uniqueness:

Roots

Have students investigate their heritage. In addition to having them each prepare a report, have them show their origins on a large world map, where their names and other information can be displayed. Have a large U.S. map so that family roots in this country can be displayed. Discuss commonalities in background.

Human Pyramid

Practice building a human pyramid, distributing places in the pyramid according to weight, height and so on. See how many children can become a part of it. Do this in a gym on mats. Use different configurations (squares, circles). Find other ways for children to connect to each other through their bodies.

Ragtime Band Musical Cooperation

Have children listen to different kinds of music from around the world. Have lots of things that make musical sounds (e.g., bottles, wind chimes, drums, toy flutes, sticks or ordinary instruments). Divide into small teams to practice and compose new music from the "instruments" available. Have each team give a performance.

In addition to building Connectiveness, the following activities also build the Sense of Power:

Tug-of-War

Divide class into large teams (eight to twelve students), approximately matched for size and weight. Have a tug-of-war on mats in the gym or a soft, grassy area. Talk about "pulling" together. Have a no-losers contest by timing it, i.e., if neither team is pulled past the mark within ten seconds, they both remain "unvanquished" winners!

The Fort

Collect large boxes and other unusual building materials that can be handled by your students from builders, the maintenance department or parents. Have the class build a fort in a corner of the playground or room. Make it a big one with turrets, bastions and catwalks. Study castles and forts and have pictures of them available. The larger the castle, the greater the feeling of accomplishment by the class.

In addition to building Connectiveness, the following activities also build the Sense of Models:

Roleplaying

Use roleplaying to resolve conflicts, plan for upcoming events (e.g., how to act on field trips), stimulate student written plays, and demonstrate good resolutions to interpersonal conflicts. Roleplaying skills need to be learned by the teacher and taught to children. Over time, they will take the activity more seriously with less anxiety. This is an activity that improves if you stick with it!

Good Sports

During competitive team physical activities (recesses, p.e. and so on) assign extra points to the team that shows good sport behavior (e.g., congratulating opponents for a good play, giving in on close calls, sharing excellent players). Make Good Sport points part of the final score if winners and losers are identified.

Planners-Runners-Builders

Divide the class into teams of twelve or more children. Divide the teams into groups of Planners, Runners and Builders. The Runners can see how to make or do something the Planners are designing. They carry the information verbally (no written information) to the Builders who have no information other than what the Runners give them. The Runners can carry questions and information back and forth. Communicating accurately, efficiently and completely are the keys to success. To start: Have two sets of a complex puzzle. The Planners see how it's put together; the Builders need their information. Change roles for different activities.

The following general teaching strategy can be used to build the Sense of Connectiveness:

Learning Teams

Learning teams can be used in most activities, in every aspect of the curriculum. Designing and using them is a major topic in itself. Teaching through the use of learning teams builds cooperation and social responsibility. When arranged properly, they are good for children with high or low Sense of Connectiveness. They also enhance the senses of Power and Models. Using learning teams as a major teaching strategy is a way to build Connectiveness-enhancing activities into every aspect of the curriculum.

Chapter

5

Building Children's Sense of Uniqueness

In order to have a high Sense of Uniqueness, children must acknowledge and respect the qualities and characteristics about themselves that are special and different. They need to receive confirmation from others that those qualities and characteristics are important and good.

This chapter will enable you to understand how the Sense of Uniqueness is formed in children and what undermines it. You will learn the basic, essential strategy for raising the Sense of Uniqueness in children as well as many one-to-one methods for doing so. Classroom and all-school activities that enhance and maintain the Sense of Uniqueness are described at the end of the chapter.

How Children Develop Their Sense of Uniqueness

Children's Sense of Uniqueness is a potential at birth, but becomes more activated as they grow. It is related to their individuality, and is determined by how this individuality is handled by the significant adults in their lives. The Sense of Uniqueness becomes important when children are in the toddler stage, since that is the first time their individuality begins to make an impact on other people. They make more noise and get into things!

When toddlers first begin to walk, their efforts are greeted with a great deal of attention. The child may be stood up, pointed in a safe direction and given a little push to get moving. When he or she does walk, there is thunderous applause from the assembled adults.

The child responds positively to all this attention; this response increases during this stage of growth until you notice the child is doing things *to get the attention,* not only for the satisfaction of expressing a new skill or demonstrating a new talent.

Before long, the adult response to new skills begins to change. Some things, such as walking or doing a jig, continue to get approval, but pulling books from the shelves, making noise or knocking knick-knacks from tables don't.

As children become more versatile in expressing themselves, a selection process occurs. They are essentially telling the world, "Look at me; this is who I am!" The world, primarily through the voices and faces of caretakers responds, "There are some things about you we adore, but there are other things about you we don't like!" Toddlers begin to get messages about who they are from the way adults respond to them. The roots of the Sense of Uniqueness are being formed.

Young children don't distinguish criticism of their behavior from who they are. Criticism or shaming is experienced by young children as a commentary about what is acceptable about them as persons, not about their behavior in the abstract. Adding to this dilemma, they don't have a command of language sufficient to describe their hurt feelings, so they cry or pout, which adds fuel to the criticism or shame.

The Sense of Uniqueness, then, is formed from the accumulated responses that adults give to children's self-expression. The earliest responses are to emerging developmental competences, such as walking, talking, or interacting with others.

As the child grows, the responses are given to more complex expressions of self having to do with imagination, fantasy play, and increasingly complex cognitive abilities (e.g., the capacity for making puns or expressing humor). Positive responses to self-expression result in a high Sense of Uniqueness. Critical responses (often expressed through shaming the child) produce a lower, or negative Sense of Uniqueness.

All families do some things to make children feel special in positive ways; all families also do some things to make children feel criticized or ashamed. This arises, in part, from the family's intention to reinforce "good" behavior while "training" children to avoid doing things that are "bad."

Family belief systems, as well as the personal characteristics of the parents, determine what's encouraged and what's not. As with the other Conditions, it's the balance among these practices that will determine the future of the child's feelings.

The table on page 96 shows some of the ways families influence children's Sense of Uniqueness.

In Chapter 1 we discussed the distinction between self-esteem and self-concept, and pointed out that self-concept is especially important with respect to the Sense of Uniqueness.

Even though self-concept is a cognitive issue, as we pointed out, this does not mean children will be able to discuss it cogently! They may not have language adequate to describe themselves accurately. They may not want to talk about their feelings about themselves.

It is very important to remember that the *feelings* one has

How Families Influence Uniqueness

Families that build Uniqueness do more of these things	***Families that lower Uniqueness do more of these things***
Respond in positive ways to children's self-expression.	Are more concerned about conformity than individuality.
Organize the home to adjust to young children's needs for self-expression, mobility and exploration.	Organize the home around adult needs and train the children to adjust.
Laugh a lot and temper criticism with humor and goodwill.	Are serious, often tense, about the need for children to behave well.
Act creatively and enjoy creative expression in their children.	Are ambivalent about creativity, not wishing their children to seem different or unusual.
Tolerate messes while children are trying to do things.	Have a strong need for neatness and order.
Avoid shaming children in front of others when they need to be corrected.	Will use all methods, including shaming, to control behavior, especially when others are watching.

about one's self-concept are the most important factor. Those feelings are the Sense of Uniqueness, and are a result of persistent and consistent messages children receive about themselves.

If children consistently receive messages that they are fine, happy, bright, funny, delightful and pleasing, they will believe them, and have a firmly rooted positive self-concept quite early in life.

If children consistently receive messages that one or more of their characteristics are not liked or valued by their caretakers, they will believe these messages too, and absorb them as part of their sense of self. This becomes even more damaging if children are criticized or shamed for characteristics they have no control over, such as their size, color, coordination, dress or looks.

By the time children show up at school, they have an idea of who they are based on what adults have been telling them for several years. Some of these ideas affect how well they learn and adjust to school.

If children have been told they're smart, they will come to school presuming they will have an easy time learning. If they have been told they're friendly and likable, they will presume they'll get along with others. If children have been told they're "OK," they will presume teachers will think so too, and they'll be inclined to express themselves freely.

You can imagine all of the different characteristics children might have had affirmed by the time they come to school. Negative self-concepts will have just as much impact as the positive (e.g., being dumb, unlikable, incompetent, and so on).

These negative self-concepts will be expressed by children with a low Sense of Uniqueness, since they need to maintain a consistent self-image and have it confirmed by others. They will be persistent in expressing such qualities, just as children with a high Sense of Uniqueness will express positive qualities.

When children have a low Sense of Uniqueness, their self-expression becomes problematic and dysfunctional. They run the risk of becoming behavior problems, children who consistently act to elicit criticism or punishment from others. Such criticism or punishment reinforces their beliefs about themselves, which is just what the behavior is unconsciously designed to do.

This creates a paradox for teachers and others in schools, since there seems little hope of overcoming a child's negative self-concept, especially if it is consistently being reinforced at home as well as in school. Behavior modification approaches have little impact on such children, since what has to change is their belief about themselves, not just the way they act. This is the fundamental reason why it is so difficult to change children who have been defined as behavior problems.

But there is a way! It is just as paradoxical, though, as the children you are trying to affect.

Essential Strategy: Affirm Their Self-Concept

Changing a child's self-concept seems a daunting task. Perhaps impossible, you may feel. How can a teacher, who has the child for such a small part of the time, expect to overcome years of negativity that are being reinforced on a daily basis at home?

First of all, you may have more consistent access to children on a daily basis than parents do. They may work odd hours; they may have personal problems reducing their involvement with their children; a good part of the child's day may be spent in daycare; and/or the family's style may be one in which intense contact is minimized.

So, you could have a much greater impact than you realize. Especially if you're working with a behavior problem child who may live in a dysfunctional family. You may have more influence on positive self-concept than anyone else in the child's life!

To build or repair children's Sense of Uniqueness you must begin by affirming them, especially the particular self-concept that underlies the behavior that is causing your concern.

Affirming low Uniqueness children means that you let them know you believe their negative ideas about themselves have validity—you understand why they believe what they do about themselves.

Even though children believe negative things about themselves and act out these beliefs, they still experience pain and anguish about their behavior. They want to think better of themselves but they don't know how. Not being able to think well of themselves in significant areas, they at least feel less bad by gaining confirmation that they're right.

Communicating your affirmation ("I can understand why you think you're dumb, since you're so far behind the rest of the class in reading.") brings the negative self-concept out into the light of day, so that it can be subject to rational evaluation ("But here's the evidence that you read better than you did last year!"), and the child can participate in changing the self-concept ("Would you like to be able to read better in the future?").

Efforts to change negative self-concepts, then, must begin with affirming the child; not to do so will elicit resistance to direct efforts to change the self-concept ("You really can read better." "No I can't, and I'll prove it!").

Children can have many kinds of negative self-concepts:

- Global self-concepts: bad, dumb, ugly, crazy, sick, no good.
- Learning self-concepts: Can't read, do math, learn, spell, write, pay attention, enjoy school.
- Body images: Too fat, skinny, slow, dark, light, hairy, tall, short.
- Relationship concepts: not likable, unfriendly, smelly, dirty, unwanted, tough, feisty, cowardly.

The negative self-concepts that matter the most are those that interfere with children's ability to perform adequately, or undermine their ability to achieve satisfaction from what they do in school even when they are successful performers in some areas.

You will need to know what the specific self-concept is that stands in the way, so your efforts to affirm a child will have the validity that comes from really knowing what's going on. Doing things to encourage self-expression will help you understand these children better. (See Activities That Build the Sense of Uniqueness.)

A low Sense of Uniqueness is built over time by repeated messages that something about a child is defective or unacceptable. Children are not aware of how their self-concept affects their behavior. Self-defeating concepts that produce discomfort, pain and failure for children are often denied or ignored.

When you affirm a child's negative self-concept, the first reaction on the child's part is likely to be incredulity. Probably no one has ever commented on that quality without either being angry or frustrated with the child, or doing it in a way that was critical or involved shaming.

Many low Uniqueness children are intrigued by this new turn of events and will pursue the point by asking what you mean. This gives you the opportunity to talk about the issue apart from the punitive context that often occurs because of the way children express their negative self-concepts.

This is not counseling! It is the beginning of a rational discussion about something that is interfering with functional classroom behavior. You are dealing with children who want to change in order to garner more praise and approval, but don't know how to do it without feeling they're not being themselves in the process. Kids with a low Sense of Uniqueness often have lots of integrity, which is why they hang on to their negative behavior so long—they think they are being true to themselves.

Here are some suggestions that will facilitate this kind of affirming discussion:

- Don't have long discussions on any one occasion. Children may have such a vested interest in hanging on to their negative self-concept that they will unconsciously try to get you to validate it through misbehaving while they're talking with you! Short conversations give them something to think about.
- Avoid judgmental statements, negative or even vaguely positive ones (e.g., "You really are much better than you think you are.") Even though it seems like praise, a child who has lived with a negative self-concept for so long will find it hard to believe. Low Uniqueness children have been judged so often they are suspicious about *any* judgments.
- Avoid public praise if you can, especially if it is likely to be effusive. Low Uniqueness children have difficulty with praise, especially when it contradicts their beliefs about themselves or the image they have presented to the world. It's better to avoid it.
- Find playful ways to keep up a dialogue with the child, e.g., leave a funny note in his or her book or have private nonsense words that are used to describe aspects of your relationship.
- Keep your discussions private in order to preserve the child's image in the group until he or she is ready to let it change.

Even though you are often using children's self-concept as the focus of your interaction with them, you nevertheless must be aware that you are addressing their feelings. Their sense of Uniqueness is how they *feel* about what they *think* of themselves. Their self-concept is the pathway to their feelings about themselves in this condition of self-esteem. This is one of the reasons our verbal exchanges can become so heated with these children, with little apparent effect on their behavior. Sometimes low Uniqueness children seem to talk you to death, but won't change! It's one expression of their paradoxical natures.

You will find many paradoxical characteristics in low Uniqueness children: unexpected expressions of considerable imagination, dysfunctional behavior that is so funny you don't know whether to laugh or punish them, a certain charm that makes it hard to punish them severely for long. They often seem disrespectful, but do it in ways that are hard to identify (e.g., calling you by your first name, but quickly correcting themselves).

These children often have high creative potential, but don't express it. They are fun to work with if you decide to have fun with them. Low Uniqueness children benefit from a light touch. They can be quite rewarding if you value imagination and creativity. You can make a difference with them that they will remember for a long time.

The Interpersonal Arena

Children with low Uniqueness often seem to be attention grabbers. They do so for two reasons: to affirm their own self-images, even though they may be negative ones; and from hoping someone will notice their motives are better than their behavior. It is these conflicting motives that make the behavior of children with a low Sense of Uniqueness seem so confusing or paradoxical.

The main theme running through the various intervention techniques for these children is respect for their individuality combined with reducing judgments (both criticism and praise) about their behavior. This is the main antidote for the negative self-concept they have developed as a result of being overly criticized for some (or many) of their individual characteristics.

Many teachers have difficulty reducing judgment, since assessing performance and giving feedback to children about their performance is intrinsic to the teaching role. Children with a low Sense of Uniqueness have special problems with judgments made about them.

Some teachers will have problems making special accommodations for low Uniqueness children despite recognizing that they need such treatment. The tension between respecting individuality and requiring conformity in classrooms is an unresolved paradox of American education. Children with Uniqueness problems are sensitive to the pressures for conformity and resist them—it's one of the things that makes them behavior problems.

As a result of the manner in which they have experienced criticism and shame, they are struggling with the existential problem of loss of self. They fight further loss of self by resisting conformity to group norms, even though this requires them to maintain and express a negative self when in group situations.

Sometimes this resistance is covert: some children don't "act out" this dilemma, they "check out" instead, being in reverie or abstracted fantasizing much of the time.

Children with a low Sense of Uniqueness are unconsciously seeking someone who will acknowledge and affirm their real self, as they sense themselves inwardly. Young children are always looking to their teachers as possible sources for this affirmation. You may be the one who does not disappoint them.

Interpersonal Arena Techniques for Building Uniqueness

There are a number of strategies you can use to build children's Sense of Uniqueness:

- Notice and affirm special characteristics and talents, even though they may be unusual or not to your taste.
- Encourage children to express their own ideas, even though they are different from your own.
- Provide alternative ways for children to express feelings; writing if it's easier than speaking, drawing if it's easier than writing, and so on.
- Communicate acceptance, even when you must limit children's behavior.
- Identify the positive aspects of unusual ideas or behavior and compliment them, rather than criticizing the negative aspects.
- Respect children's privacy, especially their desks, space and possessions.
- Allow children to perform duties and responsibilities in their own way, as much as possible.
- Find out what children think is special about themselves and provide opportunities for expressing their specialness.
- Help children find the resources and opportunities for exploring special interests.
- Avoid using ridicule and shame, even if there is a need to limit or stop a child's behavior.
- Try to understand the special circumstances of family or background influencing children's behavior and let the children know that you understand.

- Help children find effective ways to express themselves so as to help themselves and others.

The Group Arena

Children who suffer from a low Sense of Uniqueness profit from being in classrooms where there is a strong emphasis on building this condition of self-esteem. These classrooms will be orientated to self-expression in its many forms, e.g., writing, speaking, the arts, and a high tolerance for individuality in dress, personal styles and children's selection of learning methods. Teachers who have a high Sense of Uniqueness themselves are likely to have more success with such students than more conventional colleagues.

Low Uniqueness children tend to feel that they are odd or different in ways not valued and accepted by others. When they find themselves in situations where some of their odd and unusual behavior is tolerated, even encouraged, it sets up stresses which force them to pay attention to their environment.

This is a positive thing, since it reduces the time they spend in internal reverie states. At first they may be reluctant to express themselves, fearing the ridicule or criticism that has been their portion for too long. Over time, though, they will become more comfortable. With such comfort comes the willingness to produce and perform for those who have a broader tolerance for their behavior.

High Uniqueness classrooms may seem, overall, a bit chaotic to the casual observer, but children will find them warm, comfortable, exciting places to be. Children with high self-esteem profit from such classrooms because the wider boundaries for acceptable behavior allow their individuality to be expressed more easily.

Even if you don't feel you are especially artistic, you can generate many learning activities that increase individual expression and recognition.

In general, a classroom in which laughter, fun and high spirits are encouraged will be good for low Uniqueness children. It helps them take their own supposed failings less seriously, and allows them opportunities to express their rich fantasy lives often restricted in other places.

Group Arena Techniques for Building Uniqueness

The following techniques are applicable both for classrooms and the school as a whole:

- Have opportunities for children to do projects where personal expression is not graded: art projects, books, scrapbooks, and so on.
- Design activities in which differences among people are emphasized, helping children understand how being different from each other is acceptable and desirable.
- Observe children in your classroom or group carefully in order to identify special attributes that they will not express directly to you.
- Develop activities in which children's special interests and needs can determine the use of materials and products: personal essays and stories, art projects and other self-selected activities.
- Have a variety of learning opportunities available in the classroom.
- Allow as much free time as possible, where children can

choose their own activities within clearly described limits.

- Create special roles within the classroom or group. Make sure each child has the opportunity to play different roles with respect to the group.
- Provide assignments requiring children to assess and clarify their personal values and beliefs and allow them the opportunity to compare theirs with others.
- Provide multiple rewards and opportunities for individual recognition so all children can achieve some special status.

A Key Uniqueness Issue: Developing Creativity

Children with a high Sense of Uniqueness stand out because they seem to be more creative than their peers. Their creativity may show up in many areas: the arts, speaking, writing, or simply unusual self-expression in dress or manner.

These are children who seem to have a feeling of self-confidence that manifests itself as self-assertion in ways that *don't* make others uncomfortable. They like to express themselves and will do so if given the opportunity. They show their feelings (happy or sad) easily and love to do "ta-da's."

"Ta-da's" are what people do when they have expressed something of their internal process in an imaginative manner. They exclaim, "Ta-daaaa," making sure that a welcoming audience is noting, with delight, what the performer has done.

Professional performers do "ta-da's" at the end of their performance when they raise their hands, arms or eyes, letting the audience know that it is time to show great appreciation for them.

Children with a low Sense of Uniqueness either don't do "ta-da's," or are criticized or punished when they do. Children with Uniqueness problems seek affirmation for negative aspects of themselves. They tend to keep their more wholesome fantasies, imagination and creative ideas locked up inside, fearing ridicule if they're expressed.

Real creativity always has something to do with expressing a feeling or idea in some form that communicates to others. Being "good" at art does not necessarily mean a child is creative, since he or she may be mimicking what adults have modeled or are expecting. Creativity requires some degree of freedom of expression coupled with willingness and comfort in exposing one's internal processes.

This latter factor makes the Sense of Uniqueness most relevant to the issue of creativity. Even if children are given opportunity for self-expression, the manner in which they use the opportunity will differ according to their self-esteem overall, and their Sense of Uniqueness in particular. Children with a low Sense of Uniqueness will either hold back or undermine the experience with disruptive, attention-getting misbehavior. This will be their unique stamp on the experience.

Raising children's Sense of Uniqueness increases their willingness to express themselves while lessening their fear of ridicule or criticism. The expression doesn't come out of a conscious choice, but is rather a spontaneous expression of a sense of well-being that arises from feeling affirmed by the adults with whom they are interacting.

An important distinction needs to be made about creativity. This has to do with the internal and external aspect of the creative process.

The internal aspect of creativity involves fantasy, imagination, ideation and the capacity for visualizing or sensing a product or act that one wishes to bring about. This is the "stuff" that goes on inside children's minds and feelings before anything happens on the outside.

In classroom settings where creativity is enhanced, children feel that these internal processes are valued and respected. Time is allowed for them, in a variety of ways. Furthermore, children do not wish to be judged about these matters, since they are so personal, individual, and feel much more like play than work.

The forms in which the internal processes are expressed and communicated are the external aspects of creativity. These often involve learning skills, techniques and methods such as drawing, painting, speaking, acting, and so on. What we call *talent* is the wedding of the internal and external processes in ways that surprise and delight the audience, even if the audience is one person, Mom, Dad or a teacher.

Teachers can teach the external aspects of the creative process. They can only permit the internal processes to occur, without excessive judgment or criticism. This is what enhancing children's Sense of Uniqueness is about.

It is a mistake to put too much emphasis on the products of the creative process, since this tends to distract us from the things that need to be done to encourage the internal processes. Parents and educators become concerned with trying to insure the arts are provided in a well-rounded curriculum.

Enhancing children's creative potential does not require formal aesthetic programs, so much as more opportunities for self-expression in whatever format the curriculum permits. Opportunities for voicing opinions, discussing points-of-view, being allowed to put small illustrations in the margins of worksheets or homework assignments, and having symbols for themselves that can be used rather than their names are some examples of self-expression that can be used.

This is not an argument against programs in art, drama, speaking or other expressive arts, but a way to reach the same goals when resources are limited.

There are many people within and without educational systems who would rather measure outcomes to determine program quality than have children expressing themselves in ways that aren't measurable. For this reason, school support of creativity may be limited.

When children are being creative, they are "being themselves" in a most fundamental way. They are expressing who they are, how they feel and what they think. They may not look as if they are learning, i.e., taking in material they can later be tested on to see whether they have learned it.

Building children's Sense of Uniqueness is basic to enabling them to fulfill their creative potential. When children who have formerly been restricted in self-expression begin to feel comfortable expressing themselves, more than creativity is released. They also have less need to act out the negative self-concepts that have resulted in behavior problems and learning distortions, and the learning climate for all children in the classroom is improved.

Using Uniqueness Activities

Activities promoting the Sense of Uniqueness in groups and classrooms have similar features, although the content may vary from subject to subject. As with the Connectiveness activities, the Uniqueness activities are offered to stimulate your own imagination and as templates for understanding why the things you already do have different effects on different children.

Activities that enhance the Sense of Uniqueness will have a more dramatic effect on children with low Uniqueness than others. Initially this effect may be mixed—negative behaviors may become more dramatic as low Uniqueness children experience anxiety about having to express themselves in unique ways. If you persist, they will become more comfortable and confident, and evidence of high creative potential will become more apparent.

Here are some important issues that should influence how you go about designing Uniqueness activities in the Group Arena:

- Find ways to reduce grading, judgment and evaluation of children's products and performance. Expressing oneself, as these activities call for, is akin to *being oneself,* a state that should be exempt from judgment. Remember, low Uniqueness children have experienced excessive negative judgments about important parts of their self-concept.
- The group climate has to be controlled so children reduce the number of critical judgments they make about each other's work. Even though the teacher may not grade an activity, the way children "rank" each other may be just as destructive for children who already think poorly of themselves. Have critique sessions in which children only say what they liked about what a child did, e.g., after an oral report.
- Activities to enhance the Sense of Uniqueness should have several modalities for self-expression contained in them. An activity including writing, drawing, constructing and speaking is complex, because it provides many different ways to express oneself, insuring that most children will find something in the activity that they can do with satisfaction and comfort. If an activity involves only one modality, children who feel they can't do that thing well will not be willing to express themselves freely.

- When teachers sincerely let students have broad latitude for self-expression, almost anything can happen! Be prepared for things that may be marginally acceptable as low Uniqueness children test the limits of your willingness to accept whatever they do. If you can't allow this, then specify the boundaries of acceptability ahead of time as much as possible.
- Children who have not had many successful experiences in expressing themselves in group activities will be reluctant to do so, even though others with higher self-esteem do so eagerly. Children who have poor self-concepts resulting from ridicule or shame will be reluctant to express themselves fully until they know they will be affirmed in some way. It is important to affirm whatever they produce, even if it is conforming and adapted from what others have done.

Uniqueness Activities

The following activities build the Sense of Uniqueness:

Sharing

Provide regular as well as spontaneous opportunities for children to communicate about themselves in sharing sessions. Pick topics (Last Weekend, The Last Time I Went to the Doctor, I Hope...) as well as having open-ended sharing sessions. The key ingredient for this activity is that each child must share something. Not having to choose the topic reduces threat for many children.

My Planet

Have each child create a personal planet and build a model of it, as well as have pictorial or written descriptions of it. They can have anything on their planet they wish. This activity can be used as an ongoing theme, adding a fanciful element to other learning activities. Have children work on geographies, histories and social relations of their planets, articulated with regular curricular elements.

Who I Am—Silhouette

Have children outline their silhouettes on large pieces of paper with felt pen. Have each be the basis for a collage of pictures and other items that represent their qualities, interests, hopes, dreams, fears, and so on. Display the silhouettes around the room or in the halls.

In addition to building Uniqueness, the following activities also build the Sense of Connectiveness:

Self Badges

Have the children make badges that represent or describe themselves, their special attributes or characteristics. Allow them to wear them in class or around school, if they wish. Encourage different sizes, shapes and colors. Make the badges from heavy material for permanency. Have a badge-making kit in the classroom for smaller, specialized badges.

Feeling Charts

Have a list of emotions (e.g., anger, fear, love, friendliness, happiness, frustration). Pick one, discuss it and have children write something on a long sheet of butcher paper about what makes them feel that way. Decorate the paper and display it in the room for a while. Do this with different emotions from time to time. Use the key word on the spelling list and as a topic for writing essays or poems.

My Family and I Are Special

Have a display area where children create a bulletin board about themselves and their families. Display pictures, souvenirs, and other family items meaningful to the children. Leave the display up for a week and have each child give a short presentation about his or her display.

In addition to building Uniqueness, the following activities also build the Sense of Power:

Teaching Kids

When students in your class, individually or in groups, do or make something that is notable or useful in a lower grade, allow them to demonstrate it to younger children. Have a "sister class" arrangement between an upper and lower grade class for sharing student accomplishments. Have older kids teach something to younger ones.

Tell Me Something Special About You

Low Uniqueness children may not be willing to share things about themselves with the class, but may be willing to do so with you personally. Poor learners often feel they aren't respected by their teachers. Every child has something special to share if freed from fear of ridicule or shame. Have children prepare a structured presentation about themselves which they give to you alone. Have all children cycle through this activity two or three times during the school year.

Learn and Show

Have a long list of special projects that students can work on alone or in small teams, in or out of school. These projects should not be related to the regular curriculum, but should be appropriate to students' age and interests. Students can elect to do one or more during the year for extra credit. They work on it until it is ready for presentation to the class. Engage parents and others in working with the children. Students may design their own special project.

The Throne

Put a piece of purple velvet over a chair to create a throne. Let a child sit on the throne wearing a crown when sharing something that is a notable achievement for that child, e.g., a piece of writing, a poem, a picture.

In addition to building Uniqueness, the following activities also build the Sense of Models:

Anger Chart

Make a large chart with a variety of ways to express anger on it. Explain them and allow children to roleplay them. When a child expresses anger inappropriately have him or her pick another alternative from the chart. Make charts for other feelings or situations that are relevant to your children and classroom.

My Feelings Book

Each student writes a book entitled "Feelings." Each page in the book has a sentence starter: I feel happy when..., I feel angry when..., I feel surprised when..., I feel sad when.... Have a large number of sentence starters having to do with feelings. When the books are completed, have the children share them with their families as well as the class. Have students illustrate the books and encourage them to use their best handwriting.

Who Would I Like to Be?

Have students pick a favorite time in history, and/or a favorite place in the world. Have a costume and report day when the children dress according to the time and place and explain why it is so special to them, especially focusing on who or what they would have liked to have been in that place or time.

Self-Esteem Charades

Charades allow children to express their own unique perceptions. In this special charades game, the focus is on acting out positive feelings and situations. Develop a card file and list of charade items. Children pick a card to act out, while the class can look at the list to help them guess correctly. All items should be about winning, succeeding, being delighted, overcoming adversity, and so on. For example: a student who expects to fail gets an A; you receive a gift in a very large box; you meet a magic fairy who grants every wish; a giant finds that the little people love him; a princess is saved from the dragon by a handsome prince; a princess saves a handsome prince from the dragon.

Chapter

6

Building Children's Sense of Power

In order to have a high Sense of Power, children must have the competence to do what they must, the resources required to effectively express their competence, and the opportunity to use their competence to influence important circumstances of their lives. Having more successes than failures in what they do is the basis for having a good Sense of Power.

This chapter will enable you to understand how the Sense of Power is formed in children and what undermines it. You will learn the basic, essential strategy for raising the Sense of Power in children as well as many one-to-one methods for doing so. Classroom and all-school activities that enhance and maintain the sense of Power are described at the end of the chapter.

How Children Develop Their Sense of Power

It's hard to imagine that a newborn child someday might lift three hundred pounds, write a book, climb a mountain, fix a toaster or do any of the infinite number of amazing things human beings are capable of doing. One of the awe-inspiring features of our universe is the way in which a template for growth is built into human beings, ready to produce a variety of capabilities enabling us to do whatever our inclination, culture, society and existential needs require us to do.

The growth we anticipate for an infant depends as much on the way he or she *feels* as it does on genetic heritage and physiology. And how potential is realized is greatly influenced by the Sense of Power that grows along with the body and mind.

The Sense of Power begins to form at birth in primitive ways. Infants cry when they experience discomfort and very quickly show whether they are receiving a consistent response to their efforts. Their need to influence their environment (mainly Mom) is fundamental to a sense of well-being. If they have primitive feelings of powerlessness and anxiety from not having their discomfort removed, emotional distortions show up quickly. Powerlessness distorts growth very early in life.

Through infancy and toddlerhood the Sense of Power grows as the physiological and mental capabilities of the child arise in natural ways. Parents encourage, limit and respond in various ways to children's natural efforts to reach into their environments, expressing and testing new capabilities.

Somewhere during the toddler stage language and interactive factors become part of the child's repertoire, and parents' techniques for allowing or limiting different behaviors begin to diversify. Who is in control of what becomes an important question, and even casual observers can spot the growing power struggles that occur.

While the body is on its way to becoming a fully functioning entity by preschool age, the emotional substrate of future competence is being laid; patterns for the growth of the Sense of Power are forming. The main form this takes is the relationship between the decisions children can make successfully and the boundaries that are set within which those decisions can be made. This becomes the central issue in determining how the Sense of Power develops, not only during childhood and adolescence, but throughout the remainder of life.

Children's Sense of Power is a result of the range of decisions they have made successfully and the degree to which the competences they have achieved at any point in life have prepared them for each succeeding stage of development. If their range of successful decision making is broad, they can face new requirements and challenges with confidence born out of experience.

If their decision-making repertoire is limited, they will face new challenges with fear, anxiety and a presumption that they are likely to be unsuccessful. Even though their heritage and physiology would seem to insure success, their emotional stance toward experience determines how they use their personal and environmental resources.

The Sense of Power is formed in the family by how parents ensure that children make decisions and carry them out successfully. This involves balancing the child's need for self-expression with the need for order and safety in the family. Most parents will exercise control in relatively inconsistent ways.

As in most aspects of child development, the balance between how parents build or undermine the Sense of Power will determine the final outcome. Wise parents are always looking for ways to encourage self-control in their children, even though it's uncomfortable some of the time, for both parents and children!

The following table shows some of the ways families influence children's Sense of Power:

How Families Influence Power

Families that build Power do more of these things	*Families that lower Power do more of these things*
Encourage children to make choices that are appropriate to their developmental abilities.	Limit children's choices in the interest of efficiency, safety or their own anxiety.
Begin early to have children take responsibility for their own toys, spaces, clothes, and so on.	Presume that children are too small, weak or incompetent to take responsibility.
Set rules and limits clearly and consistently so children can make accurate predictions about parents' responses.	Set inappropriate or insufficient rules and limits and don't follow through on them consistently.
Take time to teach children the skills they need to carry out their duties competently.	Don't have or take time to teach children the skills they need to carry out their duties competently.
Develop reasonable and fair consequences for misbehavior or irresponsibility.	Don't set and/or carry out reasonable and fair consequences for misbehavior or irresponsibility.
Demonstrate self-control and self-discipline especially in situations of conflict, where strong emotions are involved.	Act impulsively and emotionally when children need to feel safe and protected from confusing emotions.

The key expression of children's Sense of Power, by the time they are ready for school, is their demonstrated capacity for assuming responsibility that is appropriate to their age and physical and emotional development. This criterion is true for children with handicaps as well as the general child population.

Children may come to school with many skills arising from having a high Sense of Power. Such children are persistent, make good decisions, exhibit appropriate self-control, have a broad array of well-developed skills, and are confident in approaching new and demanding tasks. School readiness is about the Sense of Power and has more to do with the emotional context in which the child has grown than with physiology, per se.

Feeling capable and competent can occur at any age. Feeling powerless and incompetent results from too many decisions that failed rather than succeeded. This also can occur at any age. Families can "spoil" their children by not holding them accountable, not teaching them useful skills, not requiring a minimal level of personal responsibility, or not setting clear and reasonable boundaries that help them make good decisions.

Parents who abuse children act with enervating inconsistency, use physical or emotional external controls rather than helping children build internal ones, set limits that are not related to children's developmental abilities, and act with excessive emotionality most of the time.

Children who grow up in abusive families learn that the world is unsafe and that control is best exercised through aggression or withdrawal. They don't learn how to take responsibility appropriately. They are either obsessively responsible or incredibly irresponsible. They are often both at different times. They are very likely to experience great difficulty at school. Fortunately, teachers are able to influence the Sense of Power in children with consistent and persistent efforts of the right sort.

Essential Strategy: Promote Their Ability to Make Decisions

Powerlessness is a communicable disease! Anybody can catch it from anyone who has it. Children get it from parents. Adults become infected by children. The evidence you're getting the disease is that you feel frustrated, angry, resentful or depressed about not being able to get other people to do what you want them to do, or to stop doing what you don't want them to do.

As a teacher, you will feel powerless most often when you feel responsible for changing behavior that only the children themselves can change. Children with a low Sense of Power would rather have you feel bad about what they're not doing than feel bad themselves.

As long as we only want children to "act right," the opportunities for power struggles, with their ensuing feelings of powerlessness, will be present. What we *really* want is for children to be able to make decisions independently and to carry them out appropriately with a minimum of adult supervision.

Rather than learning strategies for controlling children better, it's important to learn how to encourage, permit, require and demand that they make all the decisions that they are capable of making successfully. This is the essential strategy for raising and maintaining the Sense of Power.

Children with a high Sense of Power like to make their own decisions. In fact they will demand the opportunity, if they feel they aren't in charge of their own lives. They enjoy being in classrooms where teachers expect decision-making responsibility from them. Being in charge of their own behavior feels comfortable and familiar for them.

Increasing the range of decisions these children can and must make, consistent with their age and development (as well as school rules and norms), is a good teaching strategy and the best method for maintaining a high Sense of Power in children.

Children with a low Sense of Power are not good decision makers. They avoid making decisions, which is the chief way they avoid taking responsibility. They don't take action until they feel safe, which often means that they manipulate someone else into being responsible for their performance. They don't tackle learning tasks assertively, so they give up when things get tough or obstacles get in their way. They employ distracting behaviors to keep teachers and others from requiring them to be accountable for what they haven't done. This is their main method for avoiding failure.

The Golden Rule for avoiding failure is, "Don't try in the first place"! Getting children to choose to try builds Power in low Power children. Any decision you can get them to make successfully adds a small increment to their Sense of Power. Enough of these small successes will encourage them to take even greater risks (for them) in applying themselves to learning tasks.

Children with a low Sense of Power begin to feel anxious about an impending task long before those with a higher Sense of Power. Their anxiety, even though unconscious, produces distracting or avoidance behaviors that usually lead to them needing to be controlled, criticized or punished. They succeed in distracting you from moving them toward the task by engaging you in discussions or arguments about the control, criticism or punishment that you are asserting.

Such scenes characterize power struggles in the classroom, and teachers are often pulled into dealing with things other than the task at hand. Children with a higher Sense of Power become bored, resentful and distracted by the power struggles in which teachers and low Power students are frequently embroiled.

Low Power children resist any perceived intrusion on the small feelings of control they have. Even innocuous directives, ("Come here, Sammy.") are experienced as an attempt to wrest control from them, and low Power children will resist, drag their feet and act stubbornly in the face of these directives.

Adults become angry and frustrated at this behavior, especially when they did not consciously intend to take power from the child. When you use declarative or directive statements with low Power children, you risk stimulating their need to resist you. Whenever possible, it's better to use questions. ("Can you come here, Sammy?")

Interrogative statements cannot elicit the same sort of resistance from children. The child must translate the question into a command (even though many questions are commands). That small time gap, when the child is unconsciously evaluating whether the question implies a control issue, can deflate resistive behavior.

Encourage children to make decisions and use questions instead of directive statements. When these two major strategies are combined, you can build children's Sense of Power and, at the same time, deflect the resistant behavior so characteristic of low Power children. Your self-discipline in these matters will allow you to exercise greater control and avoid many power struggles.

Start by looking at the issues you can turn over to children to decide. The ones to pick, at first, are those that have little or no importance to you. They will be important to low Power children, since any decisions they can make safely and successfully make them feel good. Here's a list of low level decisions children might be allowed to make in the classroom:

- The size or color of paper on which assignments are done. White or yellow? (Children with a very low Sense of Power will do better if options are reduced to two, others may be able to choose among more.)
- Where children may sit for different activities.
- Which small decorations they can put on papers they hand in to you.
- Whether children can choose among a variety of chores that are done in the classroom, or you must assign them.
- Things children can elect to do without asking, such as sharpen pencils, dispose of trash, get a drink, put on a sweater, clean their desks. Remember that low Power children make more trouble around things they aren't permitted to do than those they are.

The next level of decisions children may be permitted to make have to do with their schoolwork. You, the teacher, will have to decide about the risks you are willing to take. Here are some options you may offer:

- "You can do either five or ten problems. You may decide."
- "When would you like to have this assignment done, by next Tuesday or next Thursday?"
- "Pick the number of words from the spelling list that you would like to be able to spell perfectly. If you spell that number perfectly you will get one hundred percent."
- "You can do reading or spelling now. Which would you like to work on?"

A third level of decision-making is more important, but more subtle. These are decisions regarding behavior the child doesn't feel responsible for.

When a low Power child lashes out at another child, it is usually justified by some kind of "They made me do it" statement. Since these children attempt to avoid responsibility as a method for avoiding failure, adults experience considerable frustration when trying to have such children assume personal responsibility for what they have done ("Even though Joey teased you, you are still at fault for hitting him.").

Low Power children have different characteristic behaviors for which they absolutely refuse responsibility. Some will never pick up after themselves; some will never admit they have victimized another child; some will never get the right thing done at the right time; some will never finish an assignment without whining and complaining. These are the maddening behaviors the child may be severely punished for when you become angry because of the continuing frustration you experience.

You can begin to communicate your belief that children are responsible, while avoiding direct confrontations. The following questions, and others like them, should be asked privately without much discussion, unless children seem to want to talk about them in a reasonable way:

- "Are you intending to hit someone today, Laura?" (Asked when the child first comes into class in the morning.)
- "Are you intending to force me to send you to the office again, Jamika, since it seems to happen whenever the music teacher is here?" (Asked before the music teacher appears.)
- How upset are you intending to make Ramone today, Eddie? You seem to upset him just about every day." (Asked before Ramone and Eddie are placed in the same group activity.)

- "Are you intending not to do your math problems today, Joy, since you have chosen not to do them for the past three days?" (Asked before you start the math lesson for the day.)

This strategy opens the possibility of dialogue in ways that aren't punitive or critical. Low Power children are so accustomed to having struggles about their "signal" behaviors that such questions give them pause.

They probably will not give rational answers to these queries, but they will think about the questions since they are so unusual. They may even think long enough to forget the behavior itself! And they will get the message that you think they are making a decision about their behavior, that they are not simply victims of others or of circumstance. Undermining low Power children's sense of victimization is a powerful tool for influencing their feelings.

The decisions you allow children to make in your classroom are based on your most comfortable teaching style. The higher your Sense of Power, the easier it will be to turn some control over to children. The more decisions children can make comfortably and successfully in the classroom, the higher the Sense of Power will be for individual children and for the class as a whole.

The Interpersonal Arena

Raising children's Sense of Power has potential emotional consequences for teachers. This is because many low Power children are adept at frustrating people's attempts to get them to perform responsibly. They usually have had long years of experience in manipulating others to do things for them. They have developed subtle, but provocative ways to keep from losing power struggles. They have created an aura of incompetence around themselves that makes caretakers feel, "It's easier if I do it myself!" The effort to influence them should not be taken lightly. Be prepared for power struggles and watch how your own Sense of Power is attacked by these children.

The most dangerous trap you can fall into is feeling and believing you are responsible for changing children's behavior. This attitude plays right into the hands of low Power children. Since your goal is to change their attitude, their willingness to perform and their motivation to try something they may fail at, you are trying to change the way they *feel.* They are in charge of their feelings, so they can hide their real reactions from you. They do it most easily by simply controlling the behavior they know you want changed. ("Yes, you will!" "No, I won't!")

When you find yourself wanting to say, "Do it now, because I say so!" you are about to fall into a power struggle, which you will later feel foolish about. Even the most compassionate teachers in a complacent moment feel a child should do something because they said so when another child's need precludes their willingness to discuss the matter.

Most children will submit when they sense the teacher's temper is short. Low Power children may resist even then, either passively or overtly. These children have developed, even at a very young age, the ability to sense when a caretaker is emotionally vulnerable, and they use the information to manipulate.

Having children make decisions is most easily done when you presume children are responsible for their own behavior. Since high Power children presume that they are responsible for their own behavior, the way you deal with them is less critical. You don't have to be so conscious about asking questions rather than making statements. They will decide for themselves to make the right decisions more often than not.

Asking questions of low Power children needs to become automatic, as much as possible. This requires a firm sense of the limits of your own responsibility for their decisions. It's something you have to keep working on, since most good teachers feel slightly more responsible than they should for their students' performance. One characteristic of superior teachers is that they are rigorous in not taking responsibility for things that should be the student's. It's why their best students remember their classes as a challenge they were successful in handling and their poorer students dislike them for many years.

Low Power students have a strong interest in undermining your control of the classroom, as well as your control of them personally. Their challenge to you might range from overt aggressive behavior to subtle passive resistance, an almost slave-like attitude that offends your sense of fairness.

In addition to those suggestions already made, here are more guidelines to help you work with low Power children:

- The reactions that low Power children demonstrate when being held accountable may range from covert, passive/aggressive resistance to overt, angry, demonstrative outbursts. The important thing to remember is that the reactions are all designed for the same end; you should not be overly impressed with the loud and boisterous ones. Calm, consistent behavior is the best response to low Power manipulativeness.
- High Power children are often offended and resentful about the pampering they perceive low Power children receiving from teachers who try to mollify them. When they see you becoming more staunch in your insistence on personal responsibility, the high Power children feel supported and affirmed. You will see better motivation and production from them.

- Most of the strategies for building the Sense of Power in the Interpersonal Arena have to do with passing increasing amounts of control back to children. You can do this best when your own Sense of Power is adequate. High Power people, children or adults, can pass control over to others, because they believe they can reclaim it if necessary.
- Low Power children gain satisfaction from making choices and decisions that are not important to children with a high Sense of Power. This means decision-making opportunities that may seem inconsequential to some children (e.g., what color paper assignments are done on) have significance to low Power children. You can enhance the Sense of Power by identifying the many unimportant options children could have, and giving them choices about them.
- Many low Power children have found that adults who get angry will feel guilty and subsequently do something to relieve them of a responsibility. Not getting angry when low Power children expect you to is the best method for defusing this kind of manipulative behavior. Such children may raise the ante in the hopes of finally getting you to blow your cool. They can be ruthless, since they know teachers must subscribe to laws and standards that set boundaries for behavior.

Interpersonal Arena Techniques for Building Power

There are a number of strategies you can use to build children's Sense of Power:

- Encourage personal responsibility by asking questions more often than you make statements. Show how their choices have produced the results they obtained.

- Help children understand how their own decision-making processes work.
- Help children evaluate their own problem solving processes and teach them ways to solve problems effectively.
- Affirm success, even though children indicate that they feel they have failed. Show which parts of an activity were successful and which parts weren't.
- Acknowledge and show respect for children's current level of competence in any area, as well as showing how to increase competence.
- Encourage children to set *short range* objectives and show them how to develop a short range plan for accomplishing them successfully. Fight the notion that things are out of control.
- Acknowledge that the children have had a positive effect on others when it is appropriate, and seek evidence this has occurred.
- Provide lots of alternatives when asking children to make choices, but make sure the limits of the available alternatives are clear.
- Hold children accountable for events that are truly under their control or influence, even if they seem to indicate they were controlled by other forces or events.
- Help children set limits, especially in regard to what they will not do to others and not let others do to them; and show them how to honor and maintain those limits. Acknowledge the difficulty of setting and keeping to the limits and disciplines one sets up for oneself.

The Group Arena

Building children's Sense of Power through properly designed activities helps everyone in the classroom, whatever the level of this condition of self-esteem. The trick is to be able to differentiate decision-making requirements, so low Power children are not required to make the same decisions in the same way that high Power children are expected to.

This is easier to do than it seems, since high Power children need much less of your time and attention in structuring decision-making opportunities. Since you already spend disproportionate time attending to the behavior of low Power children (The 80/20 Rule: You spend 80% of your time attending to 20% of the children, who are usually children with a low Sense of Power), this becomes a more effective use of that time!

One strategy for handling the differences between high and low Power children is to design activities, procedures, rules and expectations that fit high Power children, but identify the children who are likely to have difficulty with those choices and offer alternatives to them. Here's an example of this in action.

Let's say that you allow children to do a variable number of math problems (with a minimum expectation), until they feel comfortable handling the process that is involved. The chief standard is that all the problems they choose to do must be correct when they hand them in.

High Power children will do variable numbers of the problems (including all of them) and usually get them right. Stop by each of your low Power children and ask how many problems they are intending to do. They are not likely to be able to *feel* when they have mastered the math process they're working on, so they will tend to do fewer or more than they need to.

Using the method of interrogative dialogue (asking questions only), help each child to make a firm decision that is closer to what you think is a reasonable number for that child. The long range goal in building Power for low Power children is to help them sense when they really understand something and can trust themselves not to fail at it.

A classroom or school that builds the Sense of Power is dynamic, full of options for children, and often noisier and more chaotic than ordinary. It is likely the children (and teachers) will move around more in such an environment, so there will be a variety of traffic problems to handle.

You will not know what every child is doing every moment since many will be working on different tasks simultaneously. You will not have the usual tokens of control such as a quiet environment, children not moving at their own choice, large numbers working on the same thing at the same time, and clear standards for success and failure.

You will have to be ready to handle a higher level of ambiguity in the teaching/learning situation in order to build the Sense of Power significantly. Many schools and classrooms don't build Power. In fact many schools consistently undermine children's Sense of Power by not permitting them to make decisions and choices that they are capable of making successfully.

If you choose to use methods that significantly enhance the Sense of Power in children the following guidelines can help you:

- As soon as the school year begins, show children how to make decisions and give them real decisions to make. The more you talk about the decision-making process, the more conscious children will become about how they do it. Even high Power children are often not aware of how they make decisions, they just do! Low

Power children are handicapped by not have an intuitive feeling for their own decision-making approach.

- Have clear rules, regulations and consequences in the classroom and school. This helps all children make choices about their behavior, based on the predictability of outcomes. Consistency is extremely important. Start with firm limits and relax them as children demonstrate their willingness and ability to handle them well. Starting "loose" and then tightening up if children don't handle it well is a formula for disaster and lasting resentment.
- As much as possible, engage and inform your colleagues about what you are attempting to do, especially if there is a strong inclination toward conservative and traditional teaching methods in your school. Empowering children can be a threatening experience for teachers and administrators who need to maintain overt controls. The Sense of Power varies in adults as much as in children. Adults become resistant when threatened too!
- If you have many low Power children in your classroom it is best to begin to give them decision-making authority for things not closely tied to the curriculum, i.e., choosing among chores, but not choosing how many problems to solve in math. Struggles and failures will naturally occur while Power is growing in children, but will be less threatening outside of curriculum areas. As children demonstrate capability you can gradually introduce decisions in the curriculum.

Group Arena Techniques for Building Power

The following techniques are applicable both for classrooms and the school as a whole:

- Allow children to participate as much as possible in defining their learning goals, what is to be done and how.
- Give children as much choice as possible about when and how to do things. Maximize alternatives and always try to have at least two options in any activity.
- Have children act as teachers and tutors to each other and to younger people, especially in areas where they show competence. Help them find ways to share their skills.
- Involve children in setting rules for the classroom, group or school. Make such involvement meaningful by giving them the responsibility and resources to monitor the rules they set.
- Help children acquire better control over their feelings and physical bodies through movement, dance, sports and exercises.
- Pay special attention to interpersonal skills as a special skill area and develop learning activities to teach such skills.
- Help children develop a stronger sense of the relationship between work and benefits by creating "economies" that provide concrete rewards for successful performance. Mimic the real world as much as possible.
- Teach democratic decision making processes, use them as much as possible, and help children acquire skills to work with and influence the groups in which they participate.

- Allow children to work at their level of competence as long as possible before requiring them to proceed. Knowing what one can do well is a more useful awareness then knowing what one still hasn't learned.
- Help children understand their own learning styles and teach them more effective ways to learn things.

A Key Power Issue: Building Responsibility

Children act responsibly when they make appropriate decisions about their own behavior without adults constantly monitoring and controlling those choices. Over time, children who act responsibly can be left to make decisions without adult supervision. They can exercise control over their own lives while feeling confident that the choices they make will lead to success, as well as to adult approval.

This business of responsibility is not as simple as it appears on the surface. Children can adopt responsible behavior to the point where it becomes obsessive, not the healthy attribute adults would like it to be. Children who act responsibly may not be happy, nor may their overall sense of self-esteem be high. They may have problems with other self-esteem conditions, even though their Sense of Power is strong. There is a reason that I am introducing this qualification.

Many adults feel that being responsible is the *sine qua non* of effective child management, the single attribute children need to become effective adults. Much child abuse has been committed in the name of training children to be responsible. Such abuse occurs in schools as well as families. Many children who experience physical or emotional abuse act obsessively responsible as a device to please and mollify the abusing adults. I would not wish to have what I say about building a sense of responsibility in children used in the service of abusive methods of teaching children to be competent.

Children who are effective in handling school may be extremely unhappy because of self-esteem problems in another condition, despite having a high Sense of Power. These children play the school game very well and learn to please teachers in order to avoid criticism, punishment and loss of affection.

Children with high Power who have a low Sense of Connectiveness may feel lonely and alienated, even though they handle academic requirements very well. It should be remembered that high Power children control their feelings, so they may not show the casual observer that they are feeling bad. This is another reason why developing the skill of kid-watching is so important.

Let's reverse the situation and consider a child who has a low Sense of Power but a strong Sense of Connectiveness. This child may not have the persistence and overall sense of competence and responsibility to be successful academically, but his or her ability to get and keep friends is strong. The peer group matrix that values this child highly will result in his or her being quite happy much of the time, despite poor school performance. You will find such a child socializing incessantly, but you, too, will have considerable affection for the child, just like everyone else.

Raising and maintaining children's Sense of Power is one important feature of the overall strategy for enhancing self-esteem. It is the key ingredient in building a feeling of responsibility in children. It is not, by itself, the key to having a happy, comfortable child who finds satisfying success in school. The key to children's happiness is that no condition of self-esteem be so low as to produce emotional discomfort in them. The key to raising overall self-esteem is to enhance the low condition even if children have one strong condition, such as the sense of Power.

Notwithstanding this qualification, children who have a strong Sense of Power have a decided advantage in being successful in school, since they have learned to take responsibility.

The motive to act responsibly can arise from many sources. Guilt, fear, need for approval or affection, a sense of duty, submission to authority, and a need to please others can spur children to responsible behavior. So can exercising competence, meeting challenges, enjoying risks, being of service to others, affection, habit [illegible]

People act responsibly [illegible] reasons, some good, some bad. The Sense of Power is not fundamentally about *why* children act responsibly; it's about whether they have the inner resources to do so, regardless of their motives. Not having those inner resources is disabling, whether the motive to be responsible is healthy or not.

Most of us know how it feels to be empowered, often because of the relationship of that feeling to feelings of powerlessness. The Sense of Power includes presumptions of success, feelings of competence, the excitement of challenge, and the feeling of concreteness that fulfilling a practical requirement leaves us with. The latter is often felt when we finally complete an ordinary task (e.g., doing the laundry) that has been hanging over us for some time.

People with a high Sense of Power have learned to enjoy the feeling of satisfaction that completing a task produces. People with a *very* high Sense of Power add to this feeling of satisfaction the spice that challenge and risk contribute to enhancing feelings of accomplishment. There are people who have a very high Sense of Power who seem quite irresponsible about ordinary obligations while being incredibly competent in carrying out highly risky tasks that scare off most people. All of the foregoing is as true for some children as it is for adults.

In order to act responsibly, children need to know several things. Every responsible act includes a basic understanding of the following information:

Children need to know what adults think is important. Among all the things that a child can do at any point in time, the responsible act will be the one at the top of significant adults' hierarchy of values. Feeding the dog may not be important in the morning, but is absolutely essential in the evening. If children don't know or are confused about what adults think is important they will not be able to act responsibly. Children's own hierarchy of values develops as they grow. If it is compatible with that of significant caretakers, they will be considered responsible.

Children need to know how to carry out their responsibilities. If they don't have the requisite skills they will ultimately avoid trying to do the responsible thing since their efforts lead to failure and criticism. Adults can undermine children's ability to grow in responsibility by asking them to do things they aren't able to do because they haven't learned to do them well.

Children need to know what the consequences for success or failure are, so they have a choice about how responsible they need to act. In real life it is often the case that responsibilities conflict with each other. Do you finish your homework or take care of your baby brother? Do you clean your room or go to the library? When children know about consequences, they can make higher level choices among responsibilities.

Children need to know they will be asked to perform responsibilities consistent with their physical, cognitive and emotional development. Then they can feel an innate sense of comfort in setting out to do what's expected. This is not a conscious matter for children, but it exercises a profound impact on their emotional development. If they are more capable than they are permitted to be, they will not take responsibility seriously. If they don't have the biological resources to perform the tasks they're given, they will become distorted in some way, even if they are able to perform the task at an acceptable level.

The evidence for this, sad to say, can be seen in the abusive treatment of children, even that which was widespread in our own country before child labor laws limited the tasks that poor children were expected to perform. Children can perform beyond their innate capabilities if fear, hunger, the need for affection, or survival itself is the motive. Orphaned "market children" in impoverished cities around the world demonstrate levels of competence, versatility, ambition and street smarts that are far beyond their developmental capacities.

Children need an effective accountability system. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" is an incredible piece of nonsense left over from a long history of not seeing children as real people. What we have learned about child development in the twentieth century should put this maxim to rest. Physical punishment may produce short-run acquiescence, but always results in long-run emotional distortions. It is more likely to create resentment and rage rather than a sense of responsibility.

If we need a bromide to supplant it, we might try, "Spare an effective accountability system and spoil the child." I admit that it lacks a certain poetic balance, and the meter is all wrong, but it's more true. An effective accountability system includes the following elements:

- A clear description of what needs doing.
- A method for learning the skills to carry out what's required.
- A way to monitor performance.
- A feedback system so performance can be improved.
- Clear rewards and consequences for different levels of performance.
- Good communication within the system so all the above can be done in a timely manner.
- A high level of trust and goodwill so all people involved feel safe to keep trying until they get it right.

That's the way you teach children to be responsible!

Using Power Activities

Power activities always serve to empower children in some way. It is no accident that so many of them have to do with giving children authority in some areas of the school program.

There is a close relationship between democratic processes and the Sense of Power, both in schools and in the political arenas in our society. An empowered population seems naturally to gravitate toward democratic forms and free-market economic procedures.

The reason for this is simple. Individuals with a high sense of Power are uncomfortable and dissatisfied when they encounter resistance or obstacles to exercising control over the circumstances of their own lives. If there are enough individuals with high Power in a population, it is likely that they'll try for autonomy and independence, just to suit themselves, let alone the dictates of ideology.

When using strategies for raising the Sense of Power in a classroom or school it is important to recognize the degree of decision-making authority children will require to profit from the activity. All power-raising activities have to do with turning over significant decisions to children.

Children will differentiate with respect to their competence and comfort in decision making according to the level of their Sense of Power. Thus, children with a higher Sense of Power are likely to co-opt decision-making arenas, thus limiting the ability of lower Power children to experience the decision-making process. The way around this is to be sure that many Power enhancing activities are done individually, not in groups.

This allows the lower Power children to make choices and decisions in their own way, less influenced by the children with higher self-esteem. Just because decision-making authority about something important (a class party) has been turned over to a group of children, it does not insure that all will profit equitably from the opportunity.

When children are given the authority to take control of something of significance (see the Radio Show activity as an example) it does not mean that they will handle it well or responsibly the first time. This is why it is important to clarify the limits of what they can do, show them options within those limits, and point out that further authority will be offered to them as they demonstrate competence and responsibility in fulfilling the current tasks.

This also suggests that some activities need to be repeated, over time, so that children have a chance to become more responsible for the end products, such as finally producing a Radio Show without any teacher supervision. Generally speaking, one-shot activities do not significantly enhance the Sense of Power, although they may be valid for other reasons.

Power Activities

The following activities build the Sense of Power:

Special Projects

Give students the opportunity to choose special projects based on their own interests, hobbies and out-of-school activities. Provide time in school on a regular basis for those who make such choices. Require them to share their special project with others in some way. Give special credit on their grades for this work.

Spelling Bank

Set up a bank in which students can deposit words which they know how to spell and use. Pay "interest" in the form of special prizes for reaching higher levels or depositing harder words. A "deposit slip" has the word, definition and sentence on it. Select words from the bank for spelling quizzes.

Auction

Through some form of token economy system, provide students with money equivalents. Have many different ways to earn tokens. Using parent volunteers, collect articles that can be used in a class auction, insuring that there is a large number of diverse items that appeal to kids. Have a class bank in which token earnings can be deposited. Plan an auction with a "real" auctioneer, and prepare the children for participating appropriately. On Auction Day provide the children with their savings in the form of paper money in ordinary denominations. This activity relates responsible behavior and rewards.

In addition to building Power, the following activities also build the Sense of Connectiveness:

Radio Show

Have children work in small groups to develop, write and produce audio (radio) programs that can be used in other classes as learning activities. These can be original works, dramatic readings, music, and so on. Seasonal and holiday themes can be used. Students reading their own works (poems and stories) can result in an audio literary library for your classroom. Visit radio stations as part of the activity.

Classroom Council

Have a Classroom Council with rotating membership. The Council helps you plan special events, deal with special discipline problems, and has authority to influence some classroom activities and behavior. Define the positions and clarify responsibilities and how the Council procedures will work.

Student/Staff Government

Promote a Student/Staff Government for the school in which both children and adults participate. Have all-school elections for selecting among candidates. Include the youngest children and all school staff in the process. Give the Government control over some resources and specific decision-making authority. Create committees and special projects that give many children responsible roles in important school events.

In addition to building Power, the following activities also build the Sense of Uniqueness:

Be Your Own Teacher

When preparing quizzes or worksheets for math, leave empty spaces at the end in which students write out and solve their own math problems which count for credit in the same way as the other problems. Similarly, allow students to add their own words to spelling lists, and find other activities where students are able to use what they already know in order to receive credit.

Class Marshall

Give one child at a time the opportunity to be the class "boss." On that day the child is given the authority to select the game at recess, select some of the activities in the class, choose a special snack, have some influence over discipline, select the color of paper to be used on assignments, and so on. Give low Power children help in making decisions.

How Much Am I?

Have children keep an ongoing record of their weights and measurements in a booklet. It can also be a log of things they accomplish. From time to time have them weigh and measure themselves and keep a comprehensive catalog of the attributes of their bodies. Keep height and weight, arm length, span of hand, length of leg between knee and ankle, space between the eyes, width of smiling mouth, and so on. Also have them keep records of physical accomplishments, (e.g., how far they can jump, how high they can reach). Use the measurements in various math activities, such as graphing, or to teach physiology.

In addition to building Power, the following activities also build the Sense of Models:

Sports Log

Have children keep logs of their accomplishments in physical activities (e.g., speed over a course, how far they jump, throw a ball or hop). Give periodic tests in which students' grades are determined by their ability to exceed their previous level. Discourage competition, except against oneself. Use activities that unathletic children can do.

Power Exercises

Provide opportunities for children to use what they know, and receive credit for doing "more and faster." Use previously learned material (e.g., math problems, spelling words) and give "challenge quizzes." How many can you do in five minutes? How long does it take to do two hundred of them? Help children learn they can be versatile with what they already know.

Being an Artist

Show children examples of great art using a slide projector to approximate the original size of the work. Have the students draw or paint a picture on a small sheet of paper. Over several weeks, have them draw the same picture on increasingly larger sheets of paper, finally reaching the largest size you can accommodate. Encourage them to modify, expand, embellish and develop the original picture, just the way real artists do. Display the final works in the hallway. Do the same thing with poems or stories, using size as the variable, giving children an opportunity to feel power and control over a medium.

Chapter

7

Building Children's Sense of Models

In order to have a high Sense of Models children must be able to refer to human, philosophical and operational models that help them make sense of the world and what they're doing. They use these reference points to gain satisfaction from setting goals, values, personal standards and ideals.

Human models are people—real, fictional or mythic—whom the children know or know of, and consciously elect to emulate or unconsciously mimic.

Adequate human models are those that allow children to be successful when they use some characteristic of the models they are emulating. For example, a parent who enjoys reading and learning may influence a child to be successful in school if the child emulates those characteristics.

Philosophical models are ideas, values or beliefs that influence children's behavior. These can be ethical or moral principles, social or political ideas or ideals, religious values and beliefs, or standards of etiquette and normative social behavior, e.g., "Don't do things to hurt people's feelings."

Adequate philosophical models are ideas, values and beliefs that when translated into action result in children achieving success, approval in the wider arena outside the family, or a high level of personal comfort and satisfaction.

Inadequate human and philosophical models are those which, when applied to practical action, result in failure, disapproval, pain, embarrassment or punishment. For example, following the principle "Don't trust authority," can lead to great stress between a child and school.

Operational models are mental constructs that influence behavior, primarily in unconscious ways, and which have developed as a result of consistent repetitive experience. Using good manners is a case in point. If children grow up in a family where good manners are used and expected, they will ultimately use them automatically in most situations, e.g., saying "Thank you" without thinking about it.

Operational models are also all of those ordinary functional behaviors, such as tying shoes, closing doors, knowing the meaning of signs and symbols, and the uncountable number of things that we expect people to learn as they become socialized. The richer, more extensive and pervasive a child's experience has been, the greater the number of operational models available to help make sense of new experience.

This chapter will enable you to understand how the Sense of Models is formed in children and what undermines it. You will see how human, philosophical and operational models work and what the basic, essential strategies are for raising the Sense of Models in children as well as many one-to-one methods for doing so. Classroom and all-school activities that enhance and maintain the Sense of Models are discussed at the end of the chapter.

How Children Develop Their Sense of Models

The brain is an amazing thing, wherever it is found. It's especially amazing when it's well functioning and inside the head of a human being.

The Sense of Models has to do with what we can tell from casual observation about how the brain seems to work. Creatures with brains, especially those with larger brains, devote a good deal of time and attention to making sense of what's going on around them. Creatures with little brains, such as worms and flies, seem to just do a lot of things automatically, without thinking about them. As we go up the scale of animals (a scale that human beings invented, wouldn't you know!) more and more time is spent sitting around making sense of things.

Anything people do has implications for self-esteem. What implications does "making sense of things" have for our topic, and how do children develop this capability to the incredibly high levels (relative to animals further down the scale) that even very young children achieve?

The Sense of Models is biologically rooted in the brain's innate tendency to make sense of things, to instinctively seek patterns and order in whatever it is perceiving. Because it is a human activity, making sense of things provides varying degrees of satisfaction to people, young or old.

We call the feeling of satisfaction that is associated with thinking processes the Sense of Models. The Sense of Models starts to develop very early, and can be noticed in infants as young as four to six months old. They are already demonstrating they have organized many aspects of their accumulated experience and have feelings about it. For example, they recognize Mom or Dad, and show how they feel about knowing a parent is there.

As experience accumulates early in life, children begin to form mental models or patterns from this experience, which they then apply to new experiences. As these applications produce comfort and satisfaction (e.g., reaching out to Mom or Dad leads to being picked up, cuddled, and made warm and safe) the motive to make sense of things itself becomes reinforced. Building successful models seems to encourage model building or pattern seeking, since the results of doing so produce comfort and satisfaction for the infant. The learning process has begun.

As children grow older, factors other than kinesthetic experience become grist for their model-forming/pattern-seeking motives. Language acquisition provides the occasion for introducing ideas and beliefs into the process. Parents begin to distinguish good and bad, right and wrong, the conditions in which they apply, and gradually expect the child to grasp the general principle.

As children continue to grow, and their accumulating experience infuses meaning (another term for making sense of things) with more and more sophistication and differentiation, they begin to seek data in more subtle ways. They watch what people do, as well as listen to what they say, and learn by observation from the people and things around them.

The brain really starts to crank when children have all of their information-accumulating processes at work—repetitive kinesthetic experience, language abilities that help them decode complex verbal information, and the capacity for watching and learning. But this still doesn't fully explain how the Sense of Models becomes strong or weak in children.

Development of the Sense of Models depends on two things:

1. What happens as children use the models and patterns they have developed in the service of their own purposes. Such use can result in varying degrees of comfort and satisfaction, from a lot to almost none at all.
2. How children have been rewarded or acknowledged for having made sense of things, and the degree to which learning and understanding are valued in their families.

The most important of these is whether the models that children have been given and have organized from their experience are adequate to successfully gain control of the things that they are required to do. What we call intellectual "growth" is the process by which children use their prior experiences to make sense of the new experiences they're having. For example, children who have had rich and varied social experiences are less likely to feel intimidated when starting school and dealing with large numbers of children and adults.

When past experiences help children make sense of new experiences, quickly and comfortably, children have a high Sense of Models. What they know (have already made sense of) enables them to make sense of new experiences, thus producing feelings of safety, comfort and satisfaction.

When childhood experiences and their resulting models and patterns are *not* adequate to making sense of new experiences, children feel unsafe, uncomfortable and dissatisfied. What we observe in their behavior is confusion, disorganization, anxiety, and an increasing reluctance to trust their model-building faculties. Their Sense of Models has become distorted and dysfunctional.

In a manner of speaking, children with a low Sense of Models don't feel good about thinking itself, the process of consciously seeking models or patterns in their experience and in the world around them. Children with a high Sense of Models enjoy thinking; for them it is rewarding and fun.

The Sense of Models is built within the family by the manner in which parents enable children to make sense of their experience and organize it in useful ways. This involves balancing two factors. One is the manner in which the adults organize the environment, teach children the many things they need to know that are relevant to their developmental stage, and maintain consistent ethical relationships between adults and children, i.e., ways in which adults are responsible for creating order and pattern in children's experiences.

The other factor involves the requirements imposed on children to organize their own environment, behave with consistent attention to family values and beliefs, and learn from their own experiences, i.e., ways in which children are responsible for identifying order and pattern in their own experiences.

When these factors are out of balance, with either adults or children having excessive responsibility for ordering and patterning experience, the Sense of Models will become distorted.

The table on page 153 shows some of the ways families influence children's Sense of Models.

By the time children start school they have a firm Sense of Models. Whether children's Sense of Models is high or low does not set limits on how much they can learn. However, the Sense of Models does influence the satisfaction children get from learning and their motivation to engage in intellectual activities (as distinct from social relations, self-expression or physical activities of various sorts).

Children with a low Sense of Models may appear not to be very bright, because they are not interested in the intellectual and cognitive practices that are required to learn the verbal,

How Families Influence Models

Families that build Models do more of these things	***Families that lower Models do more of these things***
Maintain an orderly physical environment in the home and require children to participate through chores and duties.	Allow considerable physical disorder in the home, or limit children's involvement in keeping order.
Act consistently with respect to their stated values, beliefs and standards.	Act inconsistently and do not clarify their values, beliefs and standards.
Provide a varied array of experiences for children that provide a large number of useful memories.	Narrowly constrain the kind of experiences children can have, reducing flexibility in meeting new challenges.
Take time to teach children things they want to know and need to know, through both example and instruction.	Are impatient with how slowly children learn and don't encourage them to watch and learn.
Show interest in many things and share those interests in appropriate ways with children.	Don't share their interests or experiences with children, or do it inappropriately.
Encourage children to solve problems and figure things out for themselves, as much as possible.	Solve problems for children without involving them in the process.

mathematical and information-oriented material that schools deal in. They either have not learned those practices well in the family, or were not successful in using the results of those practices for their own comfort and satisfaction.

In other words, the human, philosophical and operational models they absorbed in their earlier years did not prove adequate in bringing about satisfying and comforting results from their efforts. Trying to make sense of things just wasn't very satisfying.

We don't know precisely when or how the automatic model-building and pattern-seeking functions of the brain become influenced by volition and motivation, so that those processes are undermined by children not being interested in thinking. It is important to keep clear the distinction between thinking and learning, or else children with low Models will be written off as poor candidates for what schools do well—teaching them to learn and think.

Learning is the acquisition of ideas, information, attitudes and skills resulting in people feeling increased control over the circumstances of their lives. All people, even children with low Sense of Models, are interested in learning, because they know that knowing things is power.

Thinking is the internal process that influences the efficiency with which one learns. Thinking competently includes things like sensing cause and effect relationships, exercising instinctive logic, reasoning from a premise, knowing when you have the answer (closure), persistence, tolerance for ambiguity, curiosity and feeling satisfaction from seeking and finding answers to complex mental problems.

Children who think well, with a high Sense of Models, learn easily. Children with a low Sense of Models struggle to learn, regardless of how smart they are. Some children with a low Sense of Models will score high on I.Q. tests, especially those given individually. Their brains function quite effectively, but their learning strategies may be impoverished.

It's fortunate that the Sense of Models, just as the other conditions of self-esteem, can be enhanced through appropriate interventions. When children know they can learn well, tell right from wrong, make sense of the confusion of childhood, and set goals for themselves that they can achieve, they're ready to make real use of their school experience. You can help children arrive at that point.

Essential Strategy: Divide, Limit, Repeat

Children with a low Sense of Models are, to varying degrees, confused, disorganized, anxious in learning situations, obsessive about small details, and have difficulty focusing on tasks. This lack of focus is not because they are being distracted by others, as low Connectiveness children are. Rather, it is a result of the difficulty they have in staying with the internal logic of the task itself.

For example, such children might get hung up on solving a problem they find difficult. They become so absorbed in it that they miss new directives, forget where they are on the page, don't remember what the teacher said to do next, or become so distraught about the answer to the problem that their sense of closure becomes distorted and they think they're finished.

The end result is they are no longer on task. When the teacher points out that they need to get back to work, they look as if they're thinking, "What are you talking about?" Low Models children are often confused, even when they don't look it or when the teacher can't understand what they're confused about.

The problems of low Models children point out something we often take for granted, especially if our Sense of Models is good. Asleep (in dreams) or awake, our brain is actively trying to make sense of what's going on, providing a constant information flow that enables people to have a certain plasticity in dealing with their environment, adjusting and adapting to it as new meanings arise from what's going on. It's this process of perception-decoding-analysis-interpretation-planning-action-evaluation that is weak or distorted in low Models children.

High Models children experience the process automatically, without conscious thought in most cases, and come out of it with useful information to help them adapt successfully in many different contexts. The essential strategy for helping low Models children is to repair, build, adjust, firm up and make available this natural process. The basic tactic is to design ways to help them experience more satisfaction from thinking.

Three techniques need to be applied simultaneously in order to build the Sense of Models. These apply in all situations where you expect children to take in information, make sense of it and use it for something.

Divide information into small units. "Michael, please get me a stapler and pencil from the stores cabinet." This simple sentence has at least seven discriminable pieces of information that Michael will have to deal with in order to accomplish the task correctly. See if you can find them. If Michael has a low Sense of Models, he's not going to be able to do it all properly! If he has a high Sense of Models, no one, including Michael, is going to think much about the message at all; it will seem as if he's doing it automatically.

Break up learning tasks into small units in order to increase the number of closure points and reference checkpoints. For example, put a red circle around three math problems. Have the child do them and show them to you before moving on to the next group, for which you do the same thing.

Use redundancy as much as possible. This means saying things again and again until you notice that a child is doing the right thing automatically. It also means using more than one modality simultaneously to tell a child something. An example would be to say, "Sarah, go to your desk." At the same time, point your finger at the desk and orient your body toward it. Using verbal directives and gestures at the same time is always helpful to low Models children.

Combining these three methods in many different situations is the basic strategy for dealing with low Models children. You will find many more things to do in the sections on the Interpersonal and the Group Arena, but these three have a fundamental impact on children whose Sense of Models is low.

It's important to remember at this point what the overall issue is. So, I'll introduce some redundancy! We are dealing with children's feelings. We are trying to increase the comfort and satisfaction they experience from learning tasks. We are selecting specific methods to increase the strength of certain feelings.

When working with the Sense of Models, we are building the feelings of comfort and satisfaction that children experience from thinking processes that produce successful outcomes. Using the above three techniques over and over again with low Models children creates a climate of safety, and produces a context for successful action that enables them to feel more and more comfortable with learning tasks.

As they feel more comfortable, safe and less anxious, they can allow the brain to do what it does well: search for models, structures and patterns, and select from prior experiences those models (operational, human and philosophical) that will enable the children to make sense of the new learning material.

Low Models children derive pleasure from successful completion of simple tasks. When you use the above strategy, you are dividing complex tasks up into small tasks. But they're still tasks to low Models children! Moving through these small tasks enables low Models children to experience satisfaction, not from having done something noble, grandiose or complex, but simply from having completed something without failure or confusion. This experience, so automatic, unconscious, and taken-for-granted by higher Models people (including teachers) is an achievement that builds self-esteem in a dramatic way.

The Interpersonal Arena

Low Models children are not always fun to work with. The intensity with which they try to avoid failure makes them seem sensitive and brittle, so you may often feel you must remain on guard to avoid offending them or hurting their feelings. Because they are so literal minded, they seem humorless.

They can become obsessed with doing something in a certain way, without flexibility or versatility, making you want to scream from frustration at not being able to get them to employ some simple, alternative method. Creative work is often beyond their ability, since they need so much clarity and structure in order to feel successful.

Teachers who like creative kids will find low Models children uninspiring. They often have the essence of "victim" about them; they anticipate being confused about complex matters.

The practical steps for building the Sense of Models in children are neither complex nor difficult. What makes them hard to do is that they require persistence, patience and the willingness to say and do the same thing over and over again, which can really become boring for an energetic and imaginative teacher.

It's important to remember that, somehow, low Models children have lacked a consistent, organized and clear context in which to learn basic living and thinking skills. You are trying to build their catalog of useful, often rote experiences that will enable them to have a good frame of reference for meeting new challenges. You may be helping them learn skills they should have learned years ago in the natural environment of the home.

Have you ever considered how much of your time is spent being patient, persistent and consistent, while children's brains "noodle around" with new information until they get it? Low Models children make this process more conscious, drawn out and less fun than higher Models children.

It will be helpful to make notes to yourself about how you should deal with these children. This is so you don't forget, wander from your purpose, and undermine the efforts that you might have made so far. It's easy to get bored in implementing a consistent program for low Models children.

Another challenge for teachers working with low Models children is to clarify their own values and beliefs and be willing to express them in ways the children can understand and remember. Some teachers have made up signs, such as "Honesty is the best policy," "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," "Hard work never hurt anyone," so that children will remember the values to be practiced in the classroom.

This may not be an important or useful activity for high Models kids, but children with Models problems benefit from this practice. The goal is *not* to convince children about the correctness of your values and beliefs (you are not trying to brainwash them), but to create a consistent climate of values and beliefs that enables low Models children to feel safer so they can learn more easily and comfortably.

Check the work of low Models children more often than average, to help them stay on track. Dividing their learning tasks into smaller units increases your contact with them. It's also important to check with them from time to time, "Tell me what you're supposed to be doing now, Jamie." "What are you going to do after you finish this, Sam?"

The payoff in working with these children is the "Light Goes On" experience. When low Models children work through a learning task, finally understand a complex process or learn a strategy for solving multiple problems, the light goes on in their eyes in a dramatic way. They can take delight in learning, like high Models children do, but they don't trust themselves to understand. When they do, you will know, and you will feel more like a teacher at that moment than you do on many days after working with children who find learning easy.

Interpersonal Arena Techniques for Building Models

There are a number of strategies you can use to build the Sense of Models in children:

- You are the primary model for children in your classroom and your behavior, in general, has an impact on them. The more consistently, fairly and ethically you can behave, with conscious attention to the values and beliefs that underlie your actions, the more children will be helped.
- Help children understand what they believe by giving them an opportunity to express their beliefs in contexts where they will not feel challenged or criticized.
- Help children set goals for their lives and learning, while recognizing that such goals may be short-lived. Help children accept the fact that goals change over time.
- Have children face the consequences of their actions,

without trying to shield them from harm they may have caused others.

- Help children learn how to do the things they are required to do at a high level of excellence.
- Set, maintain and hold to very high standards in all things you do with children, while recognizing and accepting that they will not always be able to live up to them. Progress toward a high standard should be seen as a success.
- Emphasize strengths rather than handicaps or liabilities; stress the positive rather than negative; point out successes more quickly than failures.
- Share what you believe with children in appropriate and relevant ways, without requiring their adherence to your beliefs.
- Always clarify what, why, where, when and how when assigning a task or duty to children.

The Group Arena

Two main themes characterize interventions that build the Sense of Models in the Group Arena. The first is structuring the environment (classroom or school) to reduce ambiguity. The second is creating a context of meaning by letting children know what the group stands for—the importance of the group's goals, purposes, standards, traditions and norms.

Structure the Environment

Low Models children need an environment that is well structured, consistent and dependable. Excessive ambiguity creates anxiety, which interferes with the learning/thinking processes of low Models children. High Models children profit from a higher degree of ambiguity in the environment, which they experience as a challenge to their capacity for solving problems.

Herein lies the dilemma and "artistic" challenge for the classroom teacher. Balancing the needs of high and low Models children takes thought and experimentation.

There is a simple syllogism that should be kept in mind when working with low Models children: Structuring the environment reduces ambiguity; reducing ambiguity lowers anxiety; lowering anxiety increases learning. This principle can apply to all children, but is especially valid for those who have Models problems.

Children with high self-esteem, especially those with higher Power or Models, will resist excessive structuring of their environment since it tends to reduce choices and problem solving challenges.

Here are some suggestions for dealing with this dilemma:

- Provide multiple options when giving children choices, but clarify what those options are. High Models children will have choices and low Models children can pick the first one on the list!
- If high functioning (high self-esteem) children seem to have too much time on their hands, finishing their work quickly, the classroom may be too highly structured. This means you are devoting too much attention to structuring for low Models children at the expense of those with high Models.
- Do not presume high Models children will be good role models for low Models children. The higher functioning children often steam on ahead, leaving their more confused peers wondering what they're doing. Appro-

priate structure has a more pervasive effect on performance than role models.

- Signs, posters and checklists detailing norms and procedures used in the classroom or school are very useful, since they reduce the need for you to continually state them for the low Models children. High Models kids become bored and resentful when the obvious (to them) is repeated again and again.
- Low Models children will always require much more one-to-one attention than children with a higher Sense of Models, even when the environment is structured to meet their special needs. Even when simple general directions are given the class or group, it is important to check with the low Models children to see whether they have decoded the direction properly. Don't try to design procedures that are fail-safe for low Models children; you'll only frustrate them and yourself. You will need to spend this one-to-one time with them, in any case.

Create a Context of Meaning

In many cases children who have a low Sense of Models have not experienced a home/family life that provided a clear and consistent context of meaning. A group (family, classroom, school, team, nation) needs to stand for something. When people belong to a group that stands for something, and the group acts in a way that exemplifies what it stands for, its members have a feeling of satisfaction, comfort and pride.

This process is more important for low Models children than others, since the context of meaning which the group can provide helps them make sense of what they're doing, and of what's going on in general. "What are we doing and why are we doing it?" The answer to this question is often not obvious to low Models children, raising anxiety and distracting them from learning. They need to know what the group is about and how they should act as members of it.

In a simple sense, a group's meaning is determined by the degree to which it acts consistently with its tacit or stated purpose. This process can fall apart for two reasons: either the group's purpose (goals, philosophies and standards) is not stated or not stated clearly, or the way the group is managed (by the teacher or administration) is perceived as inconsistent with what it has stated.

A simple example: Let's say that a school places high value on honesty. You share the value, apply it in your classroom and have discussed it frequently. One student, perhaps one with a high sense of Power or Uniqueness not balanced by high Connectiveness or Models, criticizes an inadequate teacher for doing a lousy job. Everyone knows it to be true, but the child is punished for insubordination!

Many children will perceive this as unfair and inconsistent with the group's norms, and because you have expressed that group norm, your credibility may become tainted. Adults don't always mean what they say. Enough of this kind of experience and the students' morale will decline, and the behavior of low Models children will deteriorate, even if no one takes special notice of it.

No group can be perfectly consistent with its stated values, since circumstances are complex and change over time. In order to maintain a feeling of consistency and reliability, the group, through its leadership (the teacher) must raise the issue of values from time to time and talk about it.

The more children are engaged in such discussions, as distinct from being lectured to, the more they are likely to understand the group's values and be committed to them. These discussions are very important to children with a low Sense of Models. You will notice them paying careful attention during the discussions, even though they may not actively contribute.

Discipline procedures are an important feature in this process, and Chapter 8 will devote attention to them; but all of the activities in classrooms and schools are expressions of the group's values and beliefs at some level, and define the context of meaning.

One reason schools are less effective learning environments than they might be is that too many children aren't clear about *why* they are required to do things, as well as what, when, where, and how things are to be done. High Models children need to know in order to satisfy their need for meaning; low Models children need to know in order to satisfy their need for consistency and order. Of course, the children can't find out if the adults don't know!

Group Arena Techniques for Building Models

The following techniques are applicable both for classrooms and the school as a whole:

- State rules and consequences for breaking them clearly and follow through consistently.
- Have clear standards for work and behavior and follow them consistently.
- Make options clear and state the variations that will be permitted within a framework.
- Do things to make work in the classroom or organization more enjoyable (e.g., play music, use humor) so children can associate work and learning with pleasant feelings.
- Keep the issue of personal values and standards of behavior constantly in front of children by showing how such factors apply to whatever they do.

- Expose children to adults who are worthy of their emulation, and who are able to relate their experiences to the children's. Help children learn how successful people accomplish their goals, through real life association, literature or film.
- Share your personal values and interests with children and invite them, as much as possible, to involve themselves in your interests, in ways that are appropriate and relevant.
- Make use of tutors and assistants who are slightly older or more experienced than your children. Children can learn a lot from role models who are only slightly more advanced than they are.
- Encourage neatness and orderliness in your classroom or school and require children to live up to those standards.
- Increase the range of children's experiences through activities that take them out of the school and by bringing many alternatives into the classroom and school.

A Key Models Issue: Learning to Learn

This section will not be a treatise on learning theory or an explication of the current thinking about thinking. Those subjects are too complex for this work and there are many other resources if you wish to pursue them. Ours is a simpler task.

The research and theoretical work that is being done about thinking and learning tends to be closely aligned with research about how the brain functions. This seems a good idea, since we wouldn't want to force children to do things that the brain can't do, although, God knows, we've sometimes tried! This view places the focus of interest inside individual children's heads. This focus on the individual is consistent with our culture's general view that the individual person is the unit of attention and the responsible actor in his or her own achievement.

The Sense of Models adds the component of feelings to the discussion of learning and thinking. It connects the cognitive and affective elements of the learning process. But the Sense of Models has both an individual internal component, how children feel about how they make sense of things, and an external component, how the environment influences children's feeling about these matters. When considered from the viewpoint of the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem, learning to learn is as connected to children's environment as it is to their internal state.

People experience learning something when they can say to themselves, "Oh, this means that!" A new meaning has been related to an old one; the person has made sense of something. If "this" and "that" are very important to the person, the feeling of satisfaction will be very strong.

Whether or not something is important is an expression of a complex relationship between a person's individual values and the values of the group within which the person lives. The degree to which children gain satisfaction from a learning experience is based both on their own values and on how they perceive their most important reference group to value the thing they have learned. Many children with excellent academic potential don't make an effort to achieve in school because their friends don't value school success and being a good student is disparaged.

Moving children toward greater satisfaction from learning (increasing their Sense of Models) requires the classroom or school environment to place high value on what they're learning, especially if the home environment doesn't or hasn't.

Doing this activates the "secret formula" in learning—children's desire, motivation and willingness to submit to learning disciplines. When the secret formula is operating, even children who aren't very bright engage in learning with enthusiasm and goodwill.

Learning to learn is the process of knowing how to gain satisfaction from learning activities. It is not simply about making the brain, in some mysterious way, a more efficient machine. Children approach learning in different ways, depending on their self-esteem profiles.

High Connectiveness children enjoy learning activities that have a strong social component, such as learning teams or cooperative learning activities.

High Uniqueness children like learning activities that are odd, unusual or novel, such as finding a way to use a multimedia approach to an ordinary spelling test (e.g., illustrating each word).

High Power children like learning activities that are challenging or contain high risk such as doing large numbers of items, or very complex ones, such as multiplying many-digit numbers.

High Models children like learning activities that are complex and closely related to their interests, such as working on a self-initiated project that involves writing, art, construction and presentation.

Activities that build the Sense of Models are ones enabling more children to experience satisfaction from learning more often.

The finest achievement of a teacher, at any level from nursery school to post-graduate work, is that he or she has inspired a student with the passion to know something, the willingness to persevere in what is required to know it, and the skills necessary to get on with the learning.

Satisfaction comes from being able to apply a variety of learning strategies and having the freedom to do them, more or less, in one's own style. "Noodling around" is one that I like to do a lot. It involves playing around with an idea or a word, a bit of daydreaming, some reverie and fantasy, maybe talking to a friend or colleague, reading something, looking words up in the dictionary, and waiting for an idea to form. At my level, I know the "noodling" is about done when I'm drawn, inexplicably, to the writing pad or computer. I've seen lots of kids in schools who "noodle around" too. But it's only one way of going about learning. Scientific method, rational and logical learning procedure, in all its variations is very good too!

Learning environments that are good for children are ones which promote, tolerate and understand the variety of ways children gain satisfaction from learning activities and provide opportunities to practice them. This automatically shows the environment places high value on learning as well as on the individual child.

Activities that build self-esteem promote such a learning environment. Isn't it nice you can do both at the same time!

Using Models Activities

Models activities always have the purpose of helping children make sense of things in some way that increases their feelings of satisfaction. More general teaching strategies (as distinct from specific activities), such as visualizing or relaxation, are intended to help children learn about how to go about accomplishing their purposes with more ease and success. Visualizing, for example, helps children develop mental models of what they're intending to do before undertaking an activity.

One of the major differences between humans and other primates is that we have a much more pervasive and generalized relationship to the future. This capacity, which is a function of the model-building capacity of our brains, serves to increase the flexibility or plasticity in our behavior.

While most animals are mainly influenced by past experience (e.g., rats in a maze) or immediate environmental information (e.g., deer smelling a human coming from upwind), we and our children can organize our resources and actions in light of an objective, goal, wish or hope. We do it all the time, even when we're not thinking about it. This is not to say that other animals don't do this sometimes, but not as much as humans, by far.

Activities that enhance the Sense of Models tend to have this sense of the future implicit in them in some way. We want to help children use and refine the human, philosophical and operational models they have so they can generate goals and purposes. This has an emotional component (wishes or desires to have, be or do something) supported by skills in planning, organizing, forecasting, foreseeing and imagining. Developing these skills is an important cognitive feature of activities that build the Sense of Models.

Young children (kindergarten through second grade) may not be able to maintain an emotional attachment to long-range goals as well as older children. But helping them organize, plan and arrange things to get their work done is an important step in having them learn how to decide on goals and reach them as they get older.

As children plan and successfully carry out their plans, their Sense of Models automatically grows from the satisfaction they experience in being successful in such learning and thinking activities. These successes result in greater skill in learning other things too, such as spelling or math.

A well-organized classroom, where there is a high degree of consistency and order in the physical aspects of school (e.g., a place for the paper and pencils, a place to put work when it's done), helps maintain the Sense of Models in high Models children, and supports the growth of the Sense of Models in children having problems with this condition of self-esteem. It works for both.

We tend to disparage rote learning. Repetition is seen as less useful than powerful learning experiences. While this is true, it is less true for children with low sense of Models, who may lack information, experience and understanding of how to be successful at school. For them, doing something again and again until they get it right may not be altogether inappropriate.

Models-enhancing activities need to be used frequently to help low Models children benefit from them. This is why specific activities may be less important than persistent teaching tactics or strategies. In the activities that follow, you will find some activities and some general strategies that will require you to construct specific applications. If you do, you will be able to help your low Models children considerably.

Models Activities

The following activities build the Sense of Models:

I Believe

Have "I believe" as a continuing theme for writing assignments. Give different topics so children can write about various values such as human relations, ethics and morals. Have children read their papers to the class. Discuss beliefs from time to time, especially when a student writes a provocative paper. Have students become aware of what they believe and how it is similar to or different from others.

Individual Work Contracts

From time to time give students the opportunity to compose their own work contract for the week. Provide a variety of acceptable alternatives from which they can choose (e.g., three, four or five pages in a workbook). Have them list the contract and evaluate themselves at the end of the week. Have other behavioral goals and objectives on the contract too (e.g., no fights or arguments).

A Day in My Future Life

Pick a date in the future, when the children in your class will be grown up. Have them write a diary of their activities for the day. Have them identify various demographic aspects of their lives at that time: age, number of children, age of parents, where they live, type of work they're doing, and so on. Have them write about their own children. Pick another date later in their future life and have them write about that too. Pick a date a thousand years in the future and have them write about themselves at that time.

In addition to building models, the following activities also build the Sense of Connectiveness:

Cooperation

Have an assignment that is due at a future date. Make the class an offer. If *everyone* completes the assignment by that date (no exceptions, no excuses) the entire class will receive some reward or benefit. Tell them that they can help each other complete the assignment and show them some ways to do so. Make sure, in on-to-one discussions, that your slower or more recalcitrant students understand the issues. Don't question how some children received help the first time you do this.

(Interestingly, teachers have reported to the author that slower students did the work with little or no help!)

Meetings

Teach children how to conduct meetings. Have a group of students conduct a meeting while the rest of the class observes them. Give everyone the opportunity to be an observer and member of a meeting. Critique meeting behavior and discuss how children can help each other in group activities, such as meetings. Talk about how adults (including parents) participate in meetings in business and community life.

Goals

Make personal and group goals important in your classroom. Talk about goals, what they are, how they're arrived at, and how they're evaluated. Have children write goals for school and their personal lives in diaries. Have the class discuss and reach consensus on goals for the class. Post the goals that are agreed on and evaluate progress toward them from time to time. Teach children how to change goals and create new ones when old ones have been reached.

In addition to building Models, the following activities also build the Sense of Uniqueness:

Class Visitors

Have special guests come to your classroom to present lectures and demonstrations of special skills or information. Choose local dignitaries, sports figures and parents who do interesting or unusual things and who can be good models of diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Invite guests frequently so children develop a sense of the broad range of opportunities available to them in the future as represented by people with whom they can identify.

Identify students who seem particularly influenced by one of the visitors and see if some follow-up activity between the visitor and student(s) can be arranged. Have a distinctive certificate for visitors.

Hall of Fame

Discuss how and why people become famous. Identify children's favorite famous people and have them explain why they chose these people. Read or have children read biographies and autobiographies of notable people. Develop categories of fame for a Classroom Hall of Fame: great scientists, leaders in the fight for social justice, leaders of countries, sports heroes, historical scoundrels. Identify people (nominees for the Hall of Fame) who fit into the categories. Have children research the nominees and propose their candidates for the Hall of Fame. Hold an election periodically to select one new member in each category. Display pictures of the members of the Hall of Fame. Emphasize positive models with whom your students can identify.

Virtue of the Week

Develop a list of important virtues, such as courage, honesty, compassion, tolerance. Select a different one each week of the school year. Put it on the spelling list. Have the students write an essay or story that exemplifies it. Discuss the behavior associated with that virtue and have the children look for that behavior in themselves or others. Read a story that exemplifies the virtue. Roleplay using the virtue. Focus on children finding evidence of the virtue in their own behavior so they can have words to describe their good qualities.

The following general teaching strategies build the Sense of Models and the Sense of Power:

Visualization

Most children have access to their own inner pictures, from which they evoke fantasies and imaginary situations, deal with fears and anxieties, and imagine the way things will or might be. Visualization is a powerful tool for helping children learn to control their own inner processes and feelings. It has been used by many teachers to help students relax and learn more effectively. Athletes regularly use visualization techniques to improve performance, as do performing artists in theater and dance. There are many resources for teachers to learn how to help children visualize. Use positive visualization before your students take a test or do a complex activity. Notice how it makes a difference. Give children visual images they can access under stressful conditions to help them manage stress.

Experiment with Learning

From time to time, permit individuals or small groups of students to make decisions about how they will learn. Let them choose where they will work (at desk, under desk, in corner, on floor, in the closet), when they will do a task, whether they wish to do it alone or in a group, how much they will do and in what sequence, whether they wish silence or music. The goal is to help students learn how they learn best from evaluating their own experience. Different children learn best in different ways. Knowing how one learns best is a powerful method for improving performance.

Body Power

Teach children how to relax and relieve stress through managing physical stress in their bodies. Before and after intensive activities done at their desks, have them "shake out" their tensions through jumping in place and shaking their bodies vigorously. Have them learn to tense and relax their limbs and other parts of their bodies to sense when they are tense. When you see evidence of tension or anxiety, remind them to use body relaxation techniques for helping themselves feel more comfortable. Add this approach to lessons on nutrition, the body, art, and all activities in which physical dexterity is useful.

Chapter

8

Discipline and Self-Esteem

Discipline and self-esteem are so closely tied it is impossible to separate them. How self-esteem is handled determines the discipline problems in a classroom or school; how discipline is handled determines the way self-esteem is enhanced or diminished in a classroom or school. Everything that you have covered to this point in this book has application to discipline/behavior management issues. This chapter will discuss self-esteem from the perspective of discipline.

Discipline problems result when children aren't able to satisfy their basic emotional needs (the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem) in acceptable ways. When children cannot find a way to feel good, they will try to feel less bad. When children have to employ this secondary motive, they will try to make the people around them feel bad.

Children act out for two reasons: they have internal stresses associated with continuing weaknesses in one of the conditions of self-esteem, and/or the external environment has norms, rules, standards, procedures or policies that don't allow them to satisfy their basic emotional needs. This latter means that the arrangement of the classroom or school persistently undermines children's ability to feel comfortable and satisfied. In thinking about discipline in the classroom or school we will focus on the Personal and the Group Arena of the four conditions.

Discipline Issues in the Personal Arena

Individual children become discipline problems because a deficit in one of the self-esteem conditions persistently drives them to find ways to feel more of that critical condition. Children who have a low Sense of Connectiveness, for example, will try to build the feeling of connection inside themselves. Since their relationship skills are diminished as a result of their low Sense of Connectiveness, their efforts will be dysfunctional, producing discomfort and lack of satisfaction for themselves, and the people around them.

Here are some of the key behaviors that lead to children becoming discipline problems as a result of weakness in each condition. (You may want to refer to the material on the Personal Arena in Chapter 2.)

Children With Low Connectiveness

Low Connectiveness children are easily distracted. When they become disconnected from the learning task the group is working on, they feel lonely and separate from others. They then try to engage other children in the distraction with them in order to feel connected to someone.

Many low Connectiveness children perceive criticism, slights or threats where they don't exist or weren't intended. They react with hurt feelings or anger, creating disturbances and alienating others. If they feel victimized by an individual or group there is likely to be ongoing conflict.

Low Connectiveness children have poor relationship skills, so their awkward or inappropriate overtures to connect with others, adults or children, are resisted, rejected or misunderstood. This causes them to react to the rejection in an aggressive or dysfunctional way.

In an effort to feel connected to others and reduce their feelings of loneliness and alienation, they will bother people. They will touch them or pull on them, and generally make pests of themselves. This causes turmoil. Other children are inclined to react angrily, often resulting in group conflict in which the teacher has difficulty identifying who started the disturbance.

Children with Low Uniqueness

Children with Uniqueness problems are often labeled "behavior problems." This means they do something to elicit criticism and punishment—breaking a rule or disrupting the group—again and again, despite knowing that they will be criticized or punished. Intensifying the punishment doesn't change the behavior, since the behavior directly expresses something about their self-concept.

Because of this, behavior modification techniques do not usually work with children who have a low Sense of Uniqueness. Their motive is to have the behavior noticed, which affirms them in the only way they know. These children do what they do in order to be the center of attention. The attention-seeking behavior often escalates into breaking rules or offending class or school norms.

Children with Uniqueness problems will often engage in extreme behavior such as vandalism, theft or insubordination.

They do this because of their extreme need to prove themselves special and unique, to do things that no one else has the courage or imagination to do.

Children with Low Power

Children with a low sense of Power have an ongoing feeling of powerlessness that they constantly seek to overcome. This often manifests as bullying, physical aggressiveness and pushing or hitting others, especially those who are smaller or less able to defend themselves. Anger, which lies just beneath the emotional surface of low Power children, is often expressed in some physical manner.

When low Power children seek to exercise control over people they produce an aggressive, resistant reaction in other children, who don't want to be controlled. This, in turn, elevates the low Power children's need to control. Escalating conflict is the result.

Low Power children produce a similar reaction in adults, who are inclined to react toward them with anger and resentment. This generally happens because adults feel so frustrated at the children's refusal to accept responsibility for even minor infractions, those for which they might not be punished in any case.

Low Power children often taunt other children into breaking rules, and then sit back and enjoy watching what happens, basking in a temporary feeling of power and influence. Of all children with self-esteem problems, children with a low Sense of Power are most likely to be involved in physical aggression, both proactive and reactive.

Children who have a very low Sense of Power are easily manipulated by children who have a slightly higher Sense of Power, since they are easily intimidated by threats of physical harm. They react with tears or misplaced anger, and may seem to have caused a disruption other children actually initiated.

Children with Low Models

The discipline problems caused by children with a low Sense of Models are perplexing since these children are motivated less by an intention to disrupt the group than by confusion about what they're doing. When you point out to them that they have done something wrong, their remorse is genuine. Many teachers feel guilty when they have to punish low Models children.

Low Models children easily become engaged in group misbehavior because they are not able to foresee the consequences to themselves of what the group is doing. They are often left holding the bag; they make excellent victims since they believe they have done something wrong if someone in authority tells them they have.

The ethics, morals and beliefs about right and wrong of low Models children can easily become confused or distorted, especially when they are anxious. When this happens they may steal, vandalize or cheat even though this behavior may seem unusual or uncharacteristic. When what they've done is pointed out and clarified, they show guilt and remorse.

Children with a *very* low Sense of Models can have such a distorted value system that they truly believe wrong is right! This may result in persistent misbehavior, e.g., they may believe it is OK to take things from children who have more than they do.

Much of the misbehavior of low Models children is petty and inadvertent, unplanned and impulsive. They do not seem to be aware of what they've done.

Discipline Issues in the Group Arena

Mischief results when adults believe they are omniscient and omnipotent with respect to children, especially in the classroom. The main result of this attitude is the feeling that when something is going wrong it's the children's fault. Educators generally don't like to admit their rules and procedures may be at the root of some of the misbehavior they have to deal with.

A major cause of discipline problems in classrooms or schools is that the techniques used to maintain order and group cohesion undermine self-esteem. Self-esteem is undermined when Group Arena techniques (rules, procedures, norms, standards and policies) do not allow children to feel comfortable and satisfied with respect to the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem. There are several reasons this may happen:

- The adults' need to control is stronger than their need to have a positive affectional climate with children.
- A majority of the adults represent cultural, social and ethnic groups different from those of the children, and they do not fully understand the norms of the children's reference groups.
- The school is designed to represent traditional values in all respects, rather than having an experimental, innovative and child-centered ethic that motivates program.
- The school's leadership is too far removed from the children's experience, giving rise to a we/they feeling of embattlement on both sides. The children don't feel understood; the leadership doesn't feel respected.
- There is a lack of staff cohesion, which results in the adults, as a group, using traditional rules and sanctions

because they can't agree on an innovative, experimental or flexible approach.

- Traditional discipline practices are employed that mask the adults' anger and frustration with each other and take it out on the children.

When Group Arena practices undermine self-esteem, children who have good self-esteem are inclined to "misbehave" in reaction to the situation, not because they are acting out emotional problems. Children with low self-esteem are not helped, since the behavior that expresses their unmet emotional needs is punished, not responded to in positive ways.

The previous chapters in this book contain information that will help you evaluate your classroom or school. Refer to the Group Arena Techniques in each of the preceding four chapters. The fewer the number of things on each list done in your classroom or school, the more likely you will find children misbehaving with respect to each condition. Here are some things to look for in the group behavior of children in your classroom or school.

When the Sense of Connectiveness Is Not Promoted

- Children will use surreptitious ways to relate to each other—whispering, note passing, being distracted by each other's behavior, paying more attention to each other than to you.
- Cliques and gangs will form easily, for self-protection and to align against adult authority in the school.
- Older children will excessively pair up, with sexual or pseudo-sexual activity being highly valued and prevalent among them.

- There will be considerable grouping based on ethnic or religious identification.

When the Sense of Uniqueness Is Not Promoted

- There will be a high incidence of bizarre behavior, children acting in quite unusual ways.
- There will be a high level of insubordination toward adults in the school. Adults will wonder why they don't receive more respect from the children.
- High Uniqueness children will engineer complex and imaginative tactics to undermine adult authority.
- Some teachers will seem to take the side of children against other teachers, and will be accused of undermining authority in the school.
- Children will place a disturbingly high premium on the tokens of group membership, such as clothing, hair styles, bicycles, shoes and so on.

When the Sense of Power Is Not Promoted

- A high incidence of physical violence and aggression will occur in the school.
- There will be many victims and victimizers among the children.
- Children will complain about not feeling safe at school, while walking to and from school, or while riding the buses.
- Students will have a general feeling that things at the school are unfair and adults act arbitrarily with impunity.

- Vandalism will be high, and children in general will not take responsibility for the physical upkeep of the school.

When the Sense of Models Is Not Promoted

- Children will be confused about rules and regulations, and will feel that consequences are not imposed fairly and evenhandedly.
- There will be a general lack of motivation to perform academic work, and the overall level of school or classroom performance will be lower than expected.
- There will be a high incidence of stealing and cheating, and there will not be a strong ethic among the children to stop it.
- Staff will feel parents are at fault; parents will feel the school should be doing more to influence children's performance and behavior.

The table on page 186 shows principles that can influence the climate of discipline and self-esteem in the classroom and/or the school. Conditions each principle is most likely to enhance in students are checked. Self-esteem will be higher, overall, and discipline problems fewer the more these principles are operating in the social system of the school. The climate in such a school has a profound impact on teacher self-esteem as well.

Principles Influencing Self-Esteem	*Connectiveness*	*Uniqueness*	*Power*	*Models*
• Staff agrees on and applies all rules in the same way.	x			x
• Parents are familiarized with rules and procedures through a printed manual that is sent home.	x		x	x
• Classroom activities which show children how their behavior affects others are designed.	x	x	x	x
• Students know that the same rules apply to everyone.	x			x
• There are rewards and incentives for students demonstrating exemplary behavior.		x	x	x
• There are special provisions for setting rules for individuals who need special treatment.		x		x
• Students can influence the rules through organized procedures for doing so (e.g., class discussions).			x	x
• A student council has some authority and responsibility in setting discipline standards and implementing them.	x		x	x
• The responsibilities of teachers, administrators, parents and non-teaching personnel in enforcing discipline are clear.		x	x	x
• There are clear procedures, known by everyone, for changing the rules.	x		x	x
• Students are clear about which behaviors are expected and which are to be avoided.		x	x	x
• Teaching personnel have ongoing opportunities to clarify their behavioral expectations and feel in control of the situation at the school.	x		x	x

Principles Influencing Self-Esteem *(continued)*	*Connectiveness*	*Uniqueness*	*Power*	*Models*
• Rules and the consequences for breaking them are clear and have been described to students both verbally and in writing.			x	x
• The goals, purposes and standards of the school and classroom have been clarified and everyone knows how the rules help achieve them.	x		x	x
• Students who are observed acting in an exemplary manner are recognized quickly with some formal citation.	x	x	x	x
• Classes and other subgroupings within the school receive special awards or recognition for exemplary behavior.	x	x	x	x
• Consequences are made more severe for multiple infractions of rules and everyone knows what these consequences are.			x	x
• Cooperation is emphasized through discussion, structured activities and special recognition for individuals and groups.	x	x	x	x
• Penalties are imposed surely and swiftly, and it is rare that rules or norms are changed for an individual case.	x			x
• In-service training for behavior management is ongoing for all school personnel.	x	x	x	x
• A staff group works with the administrator to continuously monitor the discipline situation in the school, not only when problems surface.	x		x	x

Principles Influencing Self-Esteem *(continued)*	Connectiveness	Uniqueness	Power	Models
• A school Manual of Discipline and Behavior is available as a reference for teachers and students.	x		x	x
• There are days when special aspects of appropriate behavior are emphasized (e.g., cooperation, helpfulness, compassion, responsibility).	x	x	x	x
• Teachers are given special schoolwide recognition when their classes demonstrate exemplary behavior.	x			x
• New teachers are given special training and support in classroom management techniques.	x		x	x
• Administrators and teachers, as well as support personnel, are in attendance and engaged with students during recesses, lunch periods, prior to school opening and other times when students gather in large numbers.	x	x	x	x

Chapter

9

Teachers' Self-Esteem

It's not possible to raise children's self-esteem in classrooms or schools unless teachers' self-esteem is considered at the same time. This is a "dangerous" subject, rarely discussed in this context, since teachers' personal growth and development is not considered fair game in discussions of student achievement. Teachers, rightfully, fear being held unfairly at fault for deficits in student performance.

Teachers are not superhuman, despite childhood myths and public expectations! And children are not little "widgets" to be turned out as perfect duplicates in some quality control fantasy. The dynamic relationship between teachers and children in the classroom results in a range of outcomes. Most teachers will readily admit to being more effective with some children, less with others. Excellent teachers, who are highly effective with a broad range of children, have a quality of flexibility and versatility allowing them to adjust teaching styles to meet a variety of emotional needs in different students.

This chapter explores why teachers are more effective with some children than others, how self-esteem issues can help us to understand that variability, and what teachers can do to increase their ability to meet a broader variety of student needs with more flexibility.

If you've carefully read the book to this point, you have sensed that the material on children's self-esteem applies to adults as well. Self-esteem issues, as described in this book, have universal application, and with appropriate adjustments are as relevant to adults as to children.

Increasing Comfort and Satisfaction

Two major themes characterize the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem:

1. Self-esteem is the term we apply to the feelings of comfort and satisfaction that people experience as they move through life. Just as the goal of self-esteem work for children is to increase their comfort and satisfaction in learning situations, the goal for teachers is to increase their feelings of comfort and satisfaction in the work environment of the school.
2. Self-esteem is composed of two factors: *internal* factors, which comprise the emotional structure of the person, the strengths and weaknesses in each of the four conditions; and *external* factors, which are the ways in which the environment (including other people) affects the way the person feels. How people behave is the result of the interaction of the internal and external factors.

These two principles apply to teachers' self-esteem as well as to children's. Teacher self-esteem is about the way teachers go about gaining comfort and satisfaction in the classroom or school.

What teachers "bring to the table," their own personal self-esteem structure, is part of the equation. How each teacher goes about maintaining and enhancing his or her own self-esteem is also at issue. The other part of the equation is the way the school is managed and organized—how the norms, rules, policies, procedures, human relations and decision making are conducted.

Teacher self-esteem is influenced by the way each of the four conditions is promoted in the school. In this chapter we will look at the Personal and the Group Arena of the self-esteem model.

The Relationship Between Teacher and Student Self-Esteem

It is simplistic to say that you can't raise another person's self-esteem unless you have high self-esteem yourself. If this were the case, we would see a gradual deterioration of the human condition, with no upward development possible. The four conditions model of self-esteem demonstrates a more complex relationship between teacher and student self-esteem.

Teachers are more likely to support the particular condition of self-esteem (Connectiveness, Uniqueness, Power or Models) in children that is strongest in themselves. They are likely to *not* enhance (or even undermine) the condition that's weak or low in their own self-esteem profile. Teachers who have high Connectiveness are likely to enhance Connectiveness in children in their classes; teachers with low Power are not likely to enhance the Sense of Power in children they deal with.

A high condition of self-esteem inclines one to experience much comfort and satisfaction from the behavior associated with that condition, quite unconsciously, without thinking about it. For example, a teacher with a high Sense of Connectiveness feels good about close relationships with children, promotes them and places high value on them in the classroom. The climate for Connectiveness is good in that classroom, and children who come into it with a low Sense of Connectiveness will benefit from being with that teacher, who is sensitive, compassionate and empathetic.

On the other hand, a teacher with a low Sense of Power will be uncomfortable and unsure about doing things that promote a higher Sense of Power in children (setting limits, exercising discipline, requiring responsible behavior, dealing with anger and conflict, to name a few). Children who have a low Sense of Power in that classroom won't experience the conditions necessary to build their Sense of Power. If the foregoing describes the same teacher (high Connectiveness, low Power) some children will profit from being in his or her classroom, while others will not.

The material in this chapter is challenging and may evoke emotional responses from some readers. Let's clarify some assumptions that I have made in writing it.

If you are reading this book you are *not* among that small group of teachers whose lack of productivity in the classroom is a function of their unwillingness to learn and change. You are reading this, I presume, because you are interested in the subject and in becoming more effective with your students.

Furthermore, if you are like most teachers I know, you are suffering, often silently, from concern about students who passed through your program with whom you wished to be more influential than you seem to have been. You have a great concern for the children who need something special, because they have lacked it in the past.

Most important, you are a real human being! You have strengths and weaknesses, and if you are similar to many teachers I know, are more inclined to fret about your failings than give yourself credit for your successes. You don't have perfect self-esteem, and having reached this part of the book, have found some labels that seem to apply to your own self-esteem profile. I'll let you in on a secret. After many years of working with children and adults I've concluded that there is no "perfect" self-esteem profile. We learn to work well with what we've got and to change what we can.

Teachers' personalities are one of the tools that are used in the teaching process. More than the skills used in most professions, teaching practices seem to arise from a person's nature, character and personality. Laotsze, the ancient Chinese sage, said, "He who knows others is learned. He who knows himself is wise." In teaching, this translates into the ability to control the relationship between yourself and your students by understanding why you act and react towards different children in different ways.

Self-knowledge, in the self-esteem context, means understanding how your self-esteem and the children's self-esteem interact to produce the outcomes in student learning and your own feelings of comfort and satisfaction in the classroom.

The stronger each of the four conditions is within a teacher, the more the teacher will be able to comfortably meet the needs of each of the children in the classroom.

The Personal Arena: Your Self-Esteem Profile

How can you determine your strengths and weaknesses in each of the four conditions? Self-esteem is largely unconscious, as we have stated. It has to do with your feelings, and the way they manifest in your behavior. In the Personal Arena, self-esteem is a private affair. There are several ways you can assess your self-esteem profile.

The Self-Esteem Questionnaire will help you focus on the strengths and challenges in your self-esteem profile. It is not a scientific analysis of your self-esteem, but a device to help you think about yourself and your feelings. If a close friend is willing to engage in the assessment with you, it will help you see aspects of your behavior you may overlook.

Next, you will find guidelines to help you evaluate your basic beliefs and understand their relationship to your overall self-esteem.

Finally, you will use the Personal Arena Behavior Checklists in Chapter 3 to help you understand why you relate more easily to some children and have more problems with others—and what that has to do with your self-esteem.

A Self-Esteem Questionnaire

Rate each item in the questionnaire in a way that represents your most honest judgment of yourself. Make an overall assessment of how you usually act, since you may rate yourself higher in some situations than others. Use the school or classroom as the arena to evaluate your behavior on each item, since you may act differently at home or away from school. Complete the questionnaire more than once, for different areas of your life and work, or at different times (one month apart).

- Rate the item 1—I am unable to do it, have great difficulty performing that behavior, or do it with a great deal of internal stress and apprehension.
- Rate the item 2—I am able to do it sometimes, with some feelings of stress or apprehension, and am aware

that this is a problem area for me, even though others may not notice it. I strongly wish to increase my ability to do this.

- Rate the item 3: I can do this usually, with little stress or apprehension, but there are times I experience some difficulty. I wish to improve in this area.
- Rate the item 4: I can do this comfortably in most situations, with little or no discomfort. I am satisfied with the way I handle this and have little need to improve.

My Sense of Connectiveness

☐ I am able to ask for help or can ask for something I need without feeling inadequate or guilty.

☐ When I'm with another person I focus attention on that person without being distracted by external events or my own feelings.

☐ I am congruent when I interact with people. My voice, what I say and how I feel are all in agreement.

☐ I take an active part in group activities and enjoy being involved in most of them.

☐ I show people how I feel when I like them without feeling awkward or embarrassed.

☐ I am aware of how my body feels (e.g., tension, need for rest, energetic, impending illness). I respond appropriately to these feelings.

My Sense of Uniqueness

☐ I express my ideas easily without waiting to see what other people think first.

☐ I am spontaneous and expressive and believe my feelings are important, even if they change from time to time.

☐ I leave my imprint, my taste and style, on things such as how I decorate my room, how I dress, the manner in which I conduct myself. Being myself is more important than how others think of me.

☐ I like to be alone sometimes, doing just what I feel like doing, even loafing or resting. I enjoy myself even if no one else is with me.

☐ I do things just to exercise my imagination and creativity, and I consciously make time for them.

☐ I insure that my opinions are acknowledged, either by expressing them verbally or by acting on them without saying anything.

My Sense of Power

☐ I handle a great deal of pressure without becoming upset or having headaches, stomach aches or other physical signs of stress.

☐ I set firm and clear limits for myself and others without feeling guilty or making others guilty or responsible.

☐ I express my feelings, even strong ones, without feeling that I'm losing control.

☐ I like to be in charge of projects and activities and easily volunteer to do so.

☐ I make decisions without excessive delay or stress.

☐ I like situations that are challenging and exciting, and I take risks to be in them.

My Sense of Models

☐ I have important goals guiding my life and the decisions that I make.

☐ I want to know what people expect from me and what they think a "good job" is in my position.

☐ I try to reduce confusion and ambiguity in whatever situation I find myself for myself and others.

☐ I enjoy searching for and identifying meaning and purpose in what I do. I often think about *why* I'm doing what I do.

☐ I express my values and beliefs to others without embarrassment, even if they don't agree with me.

☐ I engage in activities having to do with understanding life and developing a logical and systematic philosophy.

After completing the questionnaire, add the numbers and compare the scores for all the conditions. The absolute score is not important, but the relationship among the scores is. What's higher? What's lower? Is the difference between some of the scores large or small relative to the overall scores?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- How satisfied, overall, am I with myself and my performance?
- Do the scores on this questionnaire agree with the sense of myself that I already have?
- Is there a relationship between my high and low scores and the children with whom I am comfortable and satisfied in my classroom?
- Which self-esteem condition(s) do I need to work on?

- Can a friend help me evaluate this questionnaire and decide on a program of personal growth?
- Have I uncovered stronger feelings than I was aware of in myself? Do I need to find professional support for dealing with these issues?
- Do the results of the questionnaire correspond to things that appear on my professional evaluations as strengths or challenges?
- Do I have a support system in school or my personal life that will help me be proactive in promoting personal and professional growth in the areas indicated?

Evaluating Your Beliefs

Another method for understanding your self-esteem is to evaluate your *basic beliefs*. These have a close relationship to self-esteem since they influence how we allow ourselves to gain comfort and satisfaction. There is an interaction between basic beliefs and self-esteem; changes in one influence changes in the other.

Do you have beliefs that undermine you in achieving higher self-esteem? Use the following list of beliefs that hinder the development of each of the self-esteem conditions as a starting point for thinking about others that are not included.

Beliefs That Hinder Connectiveness

- I need to be loved by everyone before I can feel worthy.
- People are basically selfish and only motivated by self-interest.
- If I become vulnerable by opening up my feelings to others, I will be hurt, sooner or later.

- The way to correct evil and wrong-doing is to punish those who behave in those ways.
- It's not a good idea to trust others too easily.

Beliefs That Hinder Uniqueness

- If I express who I really am, people will not understand and will think I'm strange.
- My true nature, just like many people's, is inherently evil, more likely to do wrong than right.
- There is a greater power than myself that seems to want me to struggle through life.
- If I stand out, people will cut me down.
- People who seem to be special are usually found to have flaws, too.

Beliefs That Hinder Power

- It would be terrible in ways I can't foresee if things don't turn out the way I want them to.
- Bad things I can't foresee happen in most situations, so it's best to be careful and vigilant.
- I'm controlled by unconscious impulses and feelings.
- Fate has a major influence on what happens to me, and I'm helpless to do anything about it.
- Luck determines success more than any other factor.

Beliefs That Hinder Models

- There is invariably a right solution to all human problems and it is wrong if that solution is not found.
- People in authority are there for good reasons and they

usually have more knowledge about what is right for me than I do myself.

- When people don't agree about things it's best to find out who is wrong before moving ahead.
- Once I set a goal for myself it is important that I keep working toward that goal no matter what comes up.
- People spend too much time thinking about why they do things rather than just getting on with it.

Thinking about what you believe can be a lonely task, if you try to do it by yourself. Having a support group can help in the process of uncovering the major beliefs that underlie your behavior and performance. Consider starting a support group of teachers and other people who share similar concerns and stresses.

How You Relate to Your Students

Finally, there is another way you can understand your own self-esteem profile. That is to honestly assess the type of children whom you are most and least successful with in your teaching experience.

People tend to relate best to those who have similar self-esteem strengths, because they experience comfort and satisfaction from similar activities. In other words they enjoy doing things that they are most likely to do successfully, with benefits for themselves and others. It's one of the reasons that we choose our friends. Think about your closest friends; you will find that in important ways you derive satisfaction from similar things, even though you may be different in lots of ways.

Review the Personal Arena Behavior Checklists in Chapter 3. Think about children with whom you have the most difficulty. Do they have a similar low self-esteem condition? If so, there is a good probability you also have problems with that condition.

People who have difficulty with any of the self-esteem conditions tend to be limited in the ways in which they go about gaining satisfaction from experiences associated with those Conditions. They often lack particular skills that enable them to be comfortable and satisfied. For example:

- People with a low Sense of Connectiveness tend to lack interpersonal skills enabling them to relate well to a wide variety of people.
- People with a low Sense of Uniqueness tend not to enjoy novel or unusual situations or people and have difficulty expressing their own imagination and creativity.
- People with a low Sense of Power have difficulty making decisions, setting limits, dealing with conflict and taking charge of situations and people.
- People with a low Sense of Models tend to lack good analytical skills, are disorganized, become easily confused and don't handle ambiguity comfortably.

Even though most people have complex self-esteem profiles, with some conditions higher and others lower, and with strengths and weaknesses interacting in complex ways, a predominant weakness in any self-esteem condition will influence the *pattern* of a teacher's relationships with his or her students. When you review the Personal Arena Behavior Checklists, look for these patterns.

Increasing Your Self-Esteem

Once you identify the self-esteem condition(s) that are your greatest challenge, you can do things to overcome your discomfort and dissatisfaction. It's possible to create experiences for yourself in the classroom that increase your comfort and satisfaction. You can influence the way you feel by what you do!

Here are some suggestions and ideas.

To Build Your Sense of Connectiveness

- Have a class committee help you with classroom chores, handle problems, design ways to have more fun and raise performance. Even though you're the teacher, you need to feel the children are on your side, helping cooperatively.
- Invite a friend to school from time to time. If you have older children of your own, have one come to school to be your aide. Have your significant other learn, first hand, what you do.
- Plan to focus on one child for a day. Don't tell the child you're doing so. Touch the child several times, offer appropriate praise as often as possible, have the child do special chores for you, and be sure to do at least one special thing for the child. Watch what happens!
- Invite children to eat lunch with you. Do something special during that lunch period (e.g., play poker, have a special treat, listen to popular music—their favorites as well as yours.)

To Build Your Sense of Uniqueness

- Have some of your favorite things in your classroom, such as a picture or sculpture, a wall hanging, a favorite chair. If you have a favorite color, use it to decorate your room.

- Have a special way to get the class to pay attention (e.g., brass wind chimes, standing in a certain spot, a temple gong, a duck call).
- Change the order of your classroom activities periodically. Don't have reading one day but read your favorite poems to the kids. Don't make a lesson of it, just share your enthusiasm with them.
- Do something weird! Have a spelling test where children have to spell every word *wrong*, but you have to be able to tell what it's supposed to be. Have children write a story from top to bottom rather than left to right. Tell them you have a secret method for making them smarter than they ever were!

To Build Your Sense of Power

- Clarify the standards, rules and behavior you wish to have in your classroom. Write these on large posters and display them in your room. Specify consequences for rule breaking as well as rewards for meeting those standards.
- Get others to work for you! Organize a Parent Committee, starting with parents who have shown interest in their children's schooling. Have them solicit volunteers, find resources that the school can't provide, work as aides, and raise funds for class extras. Honor them publicly.
- Teach about something that you know well. Identify your chief interests and find ways to translate them into classroom activities.

- Experiment with different teaching behaviors. One day don't ever raise your voice. Sit at your desk one day, requiring children to come to you. Another day, never sit at your desk. Dress up one day, down another. Evaluate the effects of different behaviors while you increase your repertoire.

To Build Your Sense of Models

- Have pictures of relatives or historical figures whom you look up to in your classroom. Have favorite aphorisms or mottoes displayed. Tell the children about them.
- Set your goals and objectives for the year. What do you wish to accomplish, apart from school or district goals imposed on you? Share your goals with the class if appropriate. Write them down.
- Attend at least one seminar or workshop on a topic that interests you during the school year. Have a professional growth plan (including reading) for six months or a year.
- Have your class or a small group study a topic about which you know nothing. Be one of the "learners" in the group. Let the children know that you don't know anything about it.

The Group Arena: Self-Esteem and Your School

It isn't fun to work in a school that disregards teacher self-esteem! In such a school it is hard to feel comfortable and satisfied, especially in situations that involve the whole staff such as meetings, the teachers' room at recess or lunches, activity planning, and decision-making times when materials and resource distribution is determined.

Schools that don't make teacher self-esteem important tend to be overly bureaucratic. More attention is paid to efficiency, rules, policies and procedures than to the way people feel about what they're doing. Rigid schools and the people who run them tend to believe there is potential conflict between efficiency and having people feel good. They lack imagination in other ways, too.

How Schools Are Managed

The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem apply to the way schools are managed. The best schools do things that have a positive impact on teachers' self-esteem, even when they don't know that's what they're doing! Teachers and support personnel just feel that the school is a good place to work, and they feel good, most of the time, about what they're doing and the people with whom they're working. Restructuring schools will succeed only if, in the process, schools become better places to work.

A good school builds self-esteem in teachers as well as in children. Just as in any family, it's hard for children to be happy if the adults who are their caretakers aren't. When children are happy in school, it's a sign they're able to feel comfortable and satisfied. The same is true for adults.

A good school enhances each of the conditions of self-esteem in the following ways.

A Good School Builds Connectiveness

- Teachers are able to relate in a variety of ways to each other and to children.

- There are a broad array of group activities from grade level meetings to TGIF parties.
- When people sense that feelings aren't good there are ways to talk about the situation.
- Conflict is resolved quickly.
- People are concerned about the way their co-workers feel.
- Staff know a lot about each others lives, without having a feeling of intrusiveness in the atmosphere.
- The teachers' room (in a good school there is always one, even if space restrictions require it to be in a closet) is a lively, loud and happy place for people to collect.
- People may dislike meetings, but they like to get together in many ways.

A Good School Builds Uniqueness

- Individuality is respected. People can be "different" and still be respected for what they do with kids.
- Younger faculty are drawn into the system quickly and their strengths are identified and used.
- There is a feeling of innovation and experimentation in the atmosphere; people are encouraged to try new things.
- Older faculty are respected for their years of experience even if they don't avidly take up new practices.
- The intellectual atmosphere is vital; people share books, articles and ideas. Art, writing and other expressive experiences are valued highly for both staff and children.
- There is respect between teachers and support staff and

acknowledgement of each other's roles in making the school a good place for children.

A Good School Builds Power

- People are encouraged to participate actively in decisions that will influence their jobs.
- Teachers have control or influence over some of the ways that money is spent in their classrooms or the school.
- Discipline and behavior are important subjects and are handled well.
- Training and professional development are actively pursued in many ways, including training in communication, decision making, and other aspects of school management.
- There is a high level of active mutual respect between administration and staff.
- Staff opinion is actively sought on important matters.
- People work hard and volunteer for committees and school activities that interest them.
- Teaching skill is respected.

A Good School Builds Models

- People know what they're doing and why. There is continuing attention to basic principles, "What are we really trying to do here?"
- The school's goals, philosophy and standards are regularly clarified and there is a high degree of agreement among staff as to what these are.
- Ideas are important and talked about.

- New teaching strategies are learned by some and transmitted to others.
- People understand the long range goals of the school and district.
- There is pride in what has been achieved and a sense of purpose about raising standards in teaching practices as well as student performance.

Strategies to Enhance Staff Self-Esteem

Because there is such a strong relationship between how teachers feel, how they teach, and how students perform as a result of how they teach, one of the most important goals of school leadership should be to do things that inspire feelings of comfort and satisfaction in teaching staff. Schools that are good places for teachers to work, tend to be good places for children to learn!

Since the self-esteem principles we have discussed are applicable to adults as well as children, the Group Arena Techniques from Chapters 4 through 7 have been revised to show how they can make the workplace a source of comfort and satisfaction. When more things are done to promote each self-esteem condition in the Group Arena, teachers will find that coming to work feels good. Not everything that needs doing in education costs money!

The following activities and staff relations strategies are not new or unusual. I have observed just about all of them going on someplace, to the benefit of teachers and students. I have also noted different activities produce different effects on staff climate and morale. The self-esteem model helps organize staff support activities to help educators understand and predict the results of what is done. This material should also help schools in renewal or restructuring programs to select staff activities most supportive of emerging school goals.

Your school is undoubtedly doing some of these things already. It will be the rare school that isn't doing something to improve the quality of instruction and teacher satisfaction. But the more things done to increase comfort and satisfaction, the more the various conditions of self-esteem will be enhanced.

If you ask, "How much should be done?", I will ask in response, "How satisfied do you wish to feel?"

Building Connectiveness

- Create opportunities for teachers to share personal experiences with each other.
- Develop cooperative group tasks that require teachers to work together in order to complete them successfully.
- Have staff meetings in which problems are discussed and decisions made. Help teachers learn effective group and interpersonal strategies that facilitate problem solving and decision making.
- Create activities in which the entire staff can participate, such as projects, sports, plays and service activities.
- Develop multiple relationship opportunities: staff meeting rooms and work rooms, grade level meetings, task forces, standing committees, parties, TGIF at local "watering holes", a quiet room for retreats, off-campus meetings, staff retreats, holiday parties that include families.
- Emphasize service to others in the school and have teachers work with children to provide many opportunities for service activities in the school or community.

- Have occasions when the school devotes activities to the families or cultural and ethnic associations of the school. Provide opportunities for teachers to focus on their own heritage.
- Create opportunities for teachers to identify with the school or district through activities that enhance such identification. Engage teachers in planning and carrying out such activities.
- De-emphasize individuality and autonomy, the importance of teachers in their own classrooms while emphasizing cooperation and teamwork. Have many opportunities for teachers to share what they are doing in their classrooms. Encourage and support inter-class visits.
- Have clear and consistent relationship standards and talk about the norms of interpersonal behavior you wish to have within the staff.

Building Uniqueness

- Have opportunities for teachers to do projects where personal expression is highly valued (e.g., art projects, books, scrapbooks) which are displayed for other teachers as well as students to see.
- Help teachers understand how they are different from each other and how the school can put a wide variety of skills and talents to use.
- Allow teachers with special attributes that can be shared with others to demonstrate these talents and have others visit their rooms.
- Allow free choices in the curriculum as much as possible. Let teachers choose their own activities, within reasonable limits.

- Create special leadership roles within the school for teachers to assume, so each person can have an opportunity to play different roles in the staff.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to assess and clarify their personal values and beliefs about teaching and learning and allow them the opportunity to compare their views with others.
- Provide many opportunities for individual recognition for a variety of contributions to the school's program, so that teachers as well as students can achieve special status.

Building Power

- Allow teachers to participate as much as possible in defining their teaching goals, what is to be done, how, when, and why.
- Give teachers as much choice as possible in deciding when and how to do things. Develop an attitude of professional responsibility for the school's program and give teachers authority to make significant decisions.
- Have teachers act as teachers to each other and as mentors or guides for new teachers, especially in areas where they have special competence. Help them find ways to share their skills.
- Involve teachers in setting rules for the classroom, group, school or organization. Make such involvement meaningful by giving them the responsibility and resources to monitor the rules that they set.
- Help teachers maintain good health, high energy and physical fitness through wellness programs and opportunities for adult groups in movement, dance, sports and exercise.

- Pay special attention to interpersonal skills training so decision-making opportunities are supported and conflict and disagreement can be handled effectively when they naturally arise as a result of vigorous dialogue during program-planning activities.
- Teach democratic decision-making processes, use them as much as possible, and help teachers acquire skills to work with and influence the groups in which they participate.
- Allow teachers to work at their level of competence as much as possible before requiring them to proceed. Knowing what one can do well is a more useful awareness then knowing what one still hasn't learned.
- Help teachers understand their own best learning and teaching styles and develop more effective ways to learn and teach what is required. Active and relevant in-service training, planned with teacher participation, is the key to success.

Building Models

- Have the rules and policies that apply to staff behavior clearly available to all staff. Let staff know about the consequences associated with not fulfilling those rules and policies and implement them evenhandedly and fairly.
- Have clear standards, norms and expectations for work and behavior that are not covered by rules and policies, follow them consistently and have ways for staff to evaluate and monitor them.
- Make options clear and state the variations that will be permitted within a framework in all areas of staff functioning.

- Do things to make work in the classroom or school more enjoyable (e.g., play music, use humor, think about how a friendly atmosphere can be brought about) so teachers can associate work with pleasant feelings.
- Keep the issue of personal values and standards constantly alive for teachers so they can see how their personal attributes are valued in the school.
- Expose teachers to experts who are worthy of their emulation, and who are able to relate their experiences to the teachers'. Help teachers learn how successful people accomplish their goals.
- Make use of older or more experienced teachers as mentors or models for younger ones, while recognizing that new teachers may have special knowledge, too.
- Encourage neatness and orderliness in your school and require teachers to live up to those standards.
- Increase the range of teachers' experiences through activities that take them out of the school and by bringing many alternatives into the classroom and school.

Appendix

Relationships Among the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem: Planning Classroom Activities

When you plan classroom activities more than one self-esteem condition will be promoted, if the activity is a good one. There's no need to try and create "pure" activities. Each condition is influenced by the others to result in activities that meet a variety of needs simultaneously. The following guidelines will help you think about activities you can create, in addition to those described in this book.

Activities That Enhance the Sense of Connectiveness

A Connectiveness activity will always promote a feeling of group cohesion.

- When enhancing the *Sense of Uniqueness* is added, the activity will require the group to identify and make use of the special characteristics of each of its members.
- When enhancing the *Sense of Power* is added, the

activity will require the group to use a skill or skills in a cooperative way, each member of the group having a special role.

- When enhancing the *Sense of Models* is added, the activity will require the members of the group to learn something from each other in order to accomplish the group's purpose.

Activities That Enhance the Sense of Uniqueness

A Uniqueness activity will always allow an individual to express something about him or herself and receive recognition and affirmation for doing so.

- When enhancing the *Sense of Connectiveness* is added, the activity will allow the unique qualities of each member to contribute to a feeling of group cohesion; these qualities can be skills, attributes (a good sense of humor), attitudes (optimism), or other personal characteristics.
- When enhancing the *Sense of Power* is added, the activity will allow individual students to learn or use a special skill and demonstrate it to others.
- When enhancing the *Sense of Models* is added, the activity will allow individual students to learn and understand a new or different way to express something about themselves, and give them an opportunity to do so.

Activities That Enhance the Sense of Power

A Power activity will always allow individual students to use learned skills to accomplish a clear goal or objective.

- When enhancing the *Sense of Connectiveness* is added, the activity will allow a group of students to have influence over or change something, requiring the use of group skills also.
- When enhancing the *Sense of Uniqueness* is added, the activity will allow individual students to express something about themselves that has an impact on others, or has a significant effect on their feelings about themselves.
- When enhancing the *Sense of Models* is added, the activity will allow students to use learned skills, but bring them to a higher level.

Activities That Enhance the Sense of Models

A Models activity will always help students clarify goals, directions or purposes.

- When enhancing the *Sense of Connectiveness* is added, the activity will show students new ways to promote group cohesion, along with any other objectives.
- When enhancing the *Sense of Uniqueness* is added, the activity will allow students to understand people or ideas that will help them understand something about themselves.
- When enhancing the *Sense of Power* is added, the activity will teach students new ways to accomplish their own purposes more effectively or efficiently.

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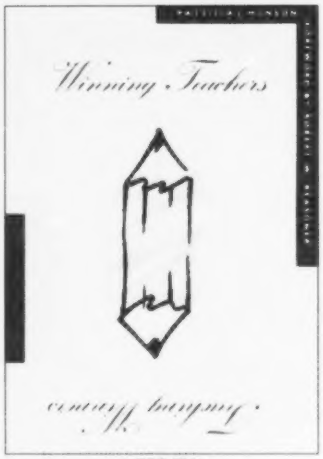
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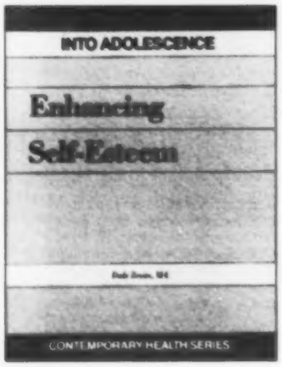
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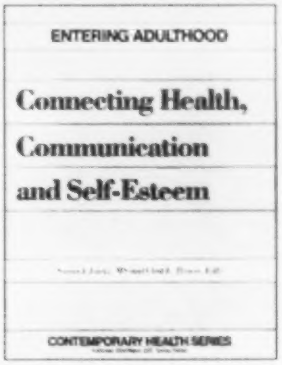
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